



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

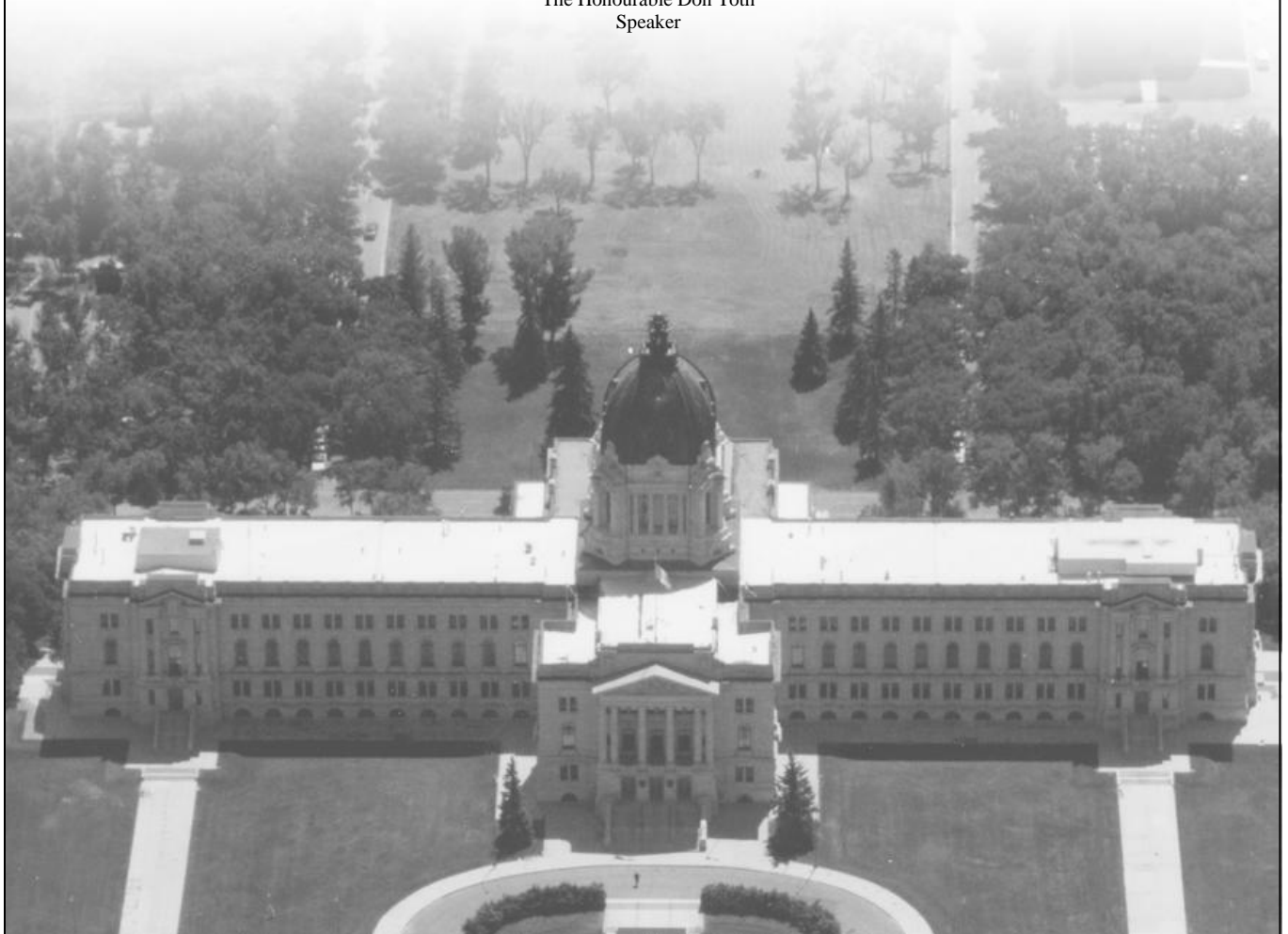
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Lingenfelter, Dwain	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, if I may request leave to give a slightly extended introduction of some special guests joining us in your gallery today.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, members. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour today to introduce some very special people seated in your gallery. Joining us today at the legislature is Mr. Mayo Schmidt, president and chief executive officer of Viterra. And also joining us today is his daughter Darian Schmidt, a grade 11 student here in Regina at Sheldon high school. With him as well is Joanne Johnson from Enterprise Saskatchewan. We want to welcome them to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, after earning a degree, a bachelor's degree from Washburn University in Topeka, Mr. Schmidt's athletic skills earned him a stint with the NFL's [National Football League] Miami Dolphins where he was a wide receiver, and I think played some special teams and made a team that was coached by Don Shula. So that was obviously no small achievement.

Then a career in the grain industry began in earnest, Mr. Speaker, including a stint as a senior executive for Nebraska-based ConAgra. And in January of 2000, Mr. Schmidt assumed the top job at the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Later he told a reporter about just how tough it was, the first day on the job at the Wheat Pool. He said, and I quote, "For me, it was time for the company to stop talking about what it had done many years past, and start talking about what it was going to do to get in control of a situation that was beginning to be out of control."

Since that forward-looking statement and attitude, Mr. Schmidt and his team at Viterra have achieved great heights on behalf of the company and on behalf of the agriculture sector in our province. We've seen the name change to Viterra. We've seen a return to profitability. In 2007 Mr. Schmidt led the successful acquisition of Agricore United, creating Canada's largest agribusiness company headquartered in the city of Regina. More recently the \$1.4 billion acquisition of ABB Grain Ltd. of Australia has certainly been in the news, and a very successful achievement it is. Mr. Schmidt's record has been nothing short of spectacular since 2000. It's been actually markedly better than the record of the Miami Dolphins, I would say.

Today we honour Mayo Schmidt who has been named CEO

[chief executive officer] of the Year by *Canadian Business* magazine. On behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, on behalf of industry in our province, on behalf of agriculture here and right across our country and North America, we want to say how proud we are that all of that happened here in Regina because of, in many respects, because of the leadership of Mayo Schmidt. We welcome him and Darian to their Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming Mayo to the Assembly today, and also congratulating him on winning executive officer of the year. And I'd like to quote from the chairman of Viterra, Thomas Birks. And he said, "His strategic and disciplined approach has positioned Viterra as a leader in shaping the future of agriculture and expanding Viterra's reach in North America and around the world."

And I think that fully describes the work that Mr. Schmidt has done since taking over at Viterra. And as a proud supporter of Viterra, and shipping a lot of our grain through the terminal at Gull Lake, I just want to say to you, Mayo, thank you for all the effort you've put into it. And we look forward to working with you in the future. Thanks.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce through you and to you some very important people in my life and in the constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale. I'd like to introduce my oldest daughter Hennessey; her cousin Leadan; my mom and dad, Georgiana and Rusty Chartier; my sister Michelle; my niece-in-law Cynthia, her son Oscar. Some people from my own constituency, Grant McMurray, Jean Schimnosky, Yvonne McGowan — I can't believe I've just missed my own CA's [constituency assistant] name; sorry, Yvonne — and her son Christopher. So I'd like us to welcome them to their Assembly. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition calling for wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that many of the workers provide valuable services to some of the most vulnerable members of our society, such as persons living with mental and intellectual disabilities; women and children in crisis; low-income, at-risk individuals; young children; youth; aboriginal, immigrant, and visible minority persons. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equity with employees who perform work of equal value in

government departments.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, these folks come from the good cities of Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in the planning and construction of new long-term care beds in La Ronge.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of La Ronge and area. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of fairness for students here in Saskatchewan through the necessary expansion of the graduate retention program. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from a variety of communities throughout Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water, and who yet have not had any commitment of assistance from the government. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency, and that this government fulfill its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are the good residents of Duck Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of maintaining quality health care services. Mr. Speaker, we're all hopeful the Government of Saskatchewan realizes the value of the full range of professional skills offered by health care providers and is promoted to addressing the retention and recruitment issues ensuring safe staffing levels. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintaining quality health care services and job security for all public health care providers.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by the residents of Leader, Eatonia, Lloydminster, and Kindersley. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing in The Battlefords, where the residents note that rents have been rising at outrageous levels, and that the vacancy rate in The Battlefords is very low.

The petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to develop an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords, and that will implement a process of rent review or rent control to better protect tenants in a non-competitive housing environment.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of The Battlefords. I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of their finances by the Sask Party. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to start managing our provincial finances responsibly and prudently to ensure that it does not continue its trend of massive budgetary shortfalls, runaway and unsustainable spending, equity stripping from our Crowns, and irresponsible revenue setting.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Shellbrook and Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Assembly Elections

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past week I had the pleasure of attending the fall assembly of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in Saskatoon. I was happy to be joined for parts of the proceedings by the members from Saskatoon Centre, Saskatoon Fairview, and the deputy leader of the official opposition, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

It was an exciting assembly, Mr. Speaker, and there was a strong field of candidates running for election. Morley Watson and Dutch Lerat were successful in the contest for vice-chief elections, and congratulations to them. I also want to thank outgoing vice-chief Glen Pratt for his years of dedicated service

In the contest for chief, Guy Lonechild was ultimately the winner after three thrilling ballots. Muskowekwan Chief Reg Bellerose and Red Pheasant Chief Sheldon Wuttunee are to be commended for their vigorous campaigns and for bringing much eloquence and intelligence to the race.

I especially want to commend Lawrence Joseph for 21 years of service to First Nations and to all people of Saskatchewan. Chief Joseph put a lot of miles on his truck over those years working for the people, and he will continue to be a passionate and compelling voice for First Nations. Ēkosi.

Finally, a big word of congratulations to new FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] Chief Guy Lonechild, his partner Leah, and their daughter Darian. Chief Lonechild brings a unique mix of experience and desire for change to the job. I had the chance to tell him that, in his words and actions, he reminded me of what another Sioux chief had called for many years ago, Tatanka Iyotanka, Chief Sitting Bull. He said, "Let us come together and see what we can do for the children."

Chief Lonechild is looking to build a better future for First Nations children and families in our province, and if that can be accomplished, it will benefit all of Saskatchewan. On behalf of my leader and my colleagues in the official opposition, congratulations Chief Lonechild.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to extend congratulations to new chief of Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Chief Guy Lonechild of the White Bear First Nations. And as well, congratulations to re-elected Vice-chief Morley Watson and newly elected Vice-chief Dutch Lerat. Chief Lonechild won a hard-fought victory over three candidates, including second-place finisher, Red Pheasant First Nations Chief, Sheldon Wuttunee; incumbent Chief, Lawrence Joseph; and Muskowekwan First

Nation Chief, Ronald Bellerose.

In Chief Lonechild's acceptance speech, he heralded a new era and a new time in his message largely directed at First Nations youth. Mr. Speaker, our government is encouraged to hear Chief Lonechild speak of a new era and the importance of working together to better the lives of First Nations people.

As he said in his acceptance speech, "When you pitch in together, anything is possible . . ." As our government moves forward with economic development and the duty to consult, we are confident that there will be great success in working with Chief Lonechild and the FSIN. Through co-operation, we can ensure that all Saskatchewan residents benefit from living in the greatest province in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge outgoing Chief Joseph for his contributions. As well, he worked tirelessly for a better future for First Nations in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

International Day of Climate Action

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 24th, my colleague from Saskatoon Massey Place and I, along with about 150 people, gathered in Saskatoon's Kinsmen Park to demand government action on climate change. It was part of the International Day of Climate Action that saw groups around the world hold more than 5,200 events registered in about 181 countries. It was coordinated by the group 350.org which campaigns for the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ to be reduced to 350 parts per million from the current level of 387.

Locally the event was organized by the Sask Environmental Society, We Are Many, Sask environmental network, Engineers Without Borders, Oxfam Canada, U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Students Union, and Road Map Saskatoon. Every event highlighted that day highlighted the number 350, and people gathered at some point for a big group photo depicting that all-important message. These photos will be put together as a gigantic, global, visual petition.

[13:45]

As we head towards the crucial UN [United Nations] climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December, this may well be the pivotal moment that determines whether or not we get this planet out of the climate crisis. And these actions demonstrate that we need a real solution that pays attention to science.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to congratulate these groups here in Saskatchewan and around the world for their leadership in continuing to bring forward the climate change crisis and positive solutions. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Paralympic School Week

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week has been named Paralympic School Week in Saskatchewan.

Paralympic School Week focuses on the value of equality and the importance of access and inclusion in all areas of life. The goal of this week is to build awareness for Paralympic Games among students and educators and to recognize athletes with disabilities and their engagement in sports and physical activities.

Mr. Speaker, I recently read an article written by Lisa Franks. Lisa Franks is a Paralympic gold medal winner in wheelchair racing from Moose Jaw. In this article, she described what it was like when she first discovered her sport. She talked about rediscovering her passion, setting new goals, developing friendships, and having a reason to believe in herself. These were all the things that were taken from her when she received her injury, Mr. Speaker, and it was through sport and the Paralympic Games that she got these back.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members of this Assembly to recognize Paralympic School Week from November the 2nd to the 6th. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Nation Builders and Community Recognition Awards

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on Sunday afternoon, I, along with the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, attended the 15th annual Nation Builders and Community Recognition Awards in Saskatoon. The award ceremony is held under the auspices of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress-Saskatchewan Provincial Council to honour members within the Ukrainian community.

Mr. Speaker, in the category of Nation Builder, the Congress has this to say of the award. The awards “. . . are presented to persons who have, without reward or gain, made meritorious contributions which have had a significant impact; left a legacy; and/or provided an exemplary role model to [either] the Ukrainian community and/or Saskatchewan-Canada.”

Mr. Speaker, recipients this year were Dr. Tony Edward Harras from Regina, Chief Judge Gerald Terry George Seniuk from Saskatoon, Orest Warnyca from Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the Community Recognition Awards are presented to persons who have made meritorious contributions in one or more areas. For Creativity, Innovation, and Leadership, the award this year went to Michael Dutchak of Blaine Lake-Saskatoon. The Award for Cultural Preservation and Development went to Stan Hawryliw, Edam-Saskatoon; Albert Kachkowski, Dauphin-Saskatoon; Catherine Woloschuk, Wroxton-Yorkton. And the Award for Leadership and Volunteerism recipients were Paul Bunka from Saskatoon, Glen Tymiak, Tadmore-Yorkton; and for Youth Achievement, Carissa Klopoushuk of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the

recipients of this year's Nation Builders and Community Recognition Awards. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Prince Albert High School Junior Girls Volleyball

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well last Wednesday evening, the Prince Albert High School Junior Girls Volleyball season came to an end with the annual extravaganza. Teams from the local high schools played throughout the afternoon and evening until the city champion was crowned.

This year the Carlton Junior Girls “A” team were crowned the champions after beating St. Mary High School in three sets. The coordinator of the tournament, Mr. Ron Stewart, a recently retired phys. ed. [physical education] teacher, commented during the medal presentations that the final game was one of the best and most exciting he's ever been a part of, throughout his many years of teaching and now coordinating high school tournaments.

I would like to congratulate the coaches, Mrs. Corin Cey and Mrs. Karey Lehner, and the team: Morgan Wauters, Rylie Bonkowski, Sydney Bueckert, Jacy Akre, Katelyn Lehner, Jasmine Pasap, Morgan Holmen, Morgan Zaparaniuk, Shelby Novak, and my two girls, Alyssa and Mackenzie Hickie.

These girls worked incredibly hard all season long, and I'd like to offer my thanks to the coaches and the Carlton High School athletics program. I would also like to thank all the teachers who coach in our schools across this province. I look forward to reading many more of these member statements as this group of athletes are some of the very best Carlton High School and Prince Albert has to offer. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Walk of Stars Recipient in Saskatoon

Ms. Atkinson: — It's an annual tradition with the Broadway business improvement district to honour a businessperson who has shown outstanding leadership to the Broadway community. The first bid star was awarded posthumously to Greg Botting, a talented and inventive business owner in the Broadway district. The award is now known as the Greg Botting Walk of Stars.

Honourees' stars are embedded in the sidewalk outside the Broadway Theatre. This year's star is Allan Wickstrom, owner-operator of the Broadway Shoe Repair, an old-fashioned business in the best sense — one that provides solid, reliable, and friendly service to customers. Allan also markets several well-known brands of sandals and boots desired by many. On Saturday, September 19th Allan's star was unveiled followed by a celebration at Lydia's, another famous Broadway venue in a landmark building.

Al Wickstrom grew up on a farm near Tompkins in the beautiful Cypress Hills. His early life created in him a hunger for a sense of belonging and contributing to community. After working at the Awl Shoppe for five years, Allan found a new

sense of community when he bought an established shoe repair business and renamed it the Broadway Shoe Repair. He quickly found his soul — no pun intended — in the Broadway area where merchants and business owners work hard to build an attractive, cohesive community serving area residents. Allan quickly formed strong friendships and alliances, giving his time and energy to many projects with his neighbouring merchants.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all of my colleagues to congratulate Al Wickstrom in getting this well-deserved star of Broadway.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Staffing in Health Care Facilities

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, last week the minister admitted that he had ignored 1,300 notices of offence, those cases where patients' care was at risk because of the lack of staff. Today, Mr. Speaker, I have 1,000 more notices of offence that he has received and will be receiving that have come in since June of this year. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: are you going to ignore these . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I have reminded members of the rules of the questions, not only to be directed through the Chair, but no reference to personal, but by ministry or government. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister: will he please now understand that these 1,000 violations need to be dealt with? And will you now call an investigation into the care and concern that have been brought forward?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this issue was brought to light a week or so ago in the House. At that time I said to the members opposite that, if people that are working in the health care system feel that they're operating in conditions that are unsafe, there is a process to go through, through their bargaining unit and through management. And those issues will be addressed, Mr. Speaker. They're called critical incidents, Mr. Speaker, and they will be addressed through the proper processes.

These letters that are coming to the floor today are no different than the letters that we saw the last time. And I said at that time, unfortunately we've inherited a health care system that was understaffed because of years of mismanagement through the NDP [New Democratic Party]. Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with that. And we continue to deal with that into the future.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the minister can make light of these notices of offence that have been received: 2,300 — 2,300 have been brought to the attention of this government. Mr. Speaker, these are not the rules that the NDP brought into

place. These are rules that this government, this minister, brought in in the essential services legislation. Now 2,300 have been brought forward.

My question is, when will he call an investigation into these cases, these 2,300 cases?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to provide a bit of an update on our very important essential service legislation. We know this is a new process. That being said, we're seeing early successes right across the province. In Moose Jaw, in Swift Current, in Melville, in Saskatoon, we see agreements being signed, Mr. Speaker, and we know there are others under way.

We certainly are aware of the concerns that have been expressed. But importantly, the Labour Relations Board is the dispute settlement mechanism in these instances, Mr. Speaker. It's important for the members opposite to understand the process that's under way. We're seeing real successes, which means the people of this province will be protected even more under essential service legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — My question is back to the Minister of Health. The minister knows that he has received 2,300 expressions of concern. What we want to ask the minister is this. When the SEIU [Service Employees International Union] West presented these 1,000 new notice of offence last Friday, their president, Barb Cape, asked the following question, and I quote:

How can safe staffing be important during the potential job action, but of no concern during the rest of the year? Isn't health care 365 days a year, 24 hours a day?

Can you answer the president's question?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as we've said several times, several times within this legislature, we know that this piece of legislation — the essential service legislation — offers a balance between the right to strike and protecting the health and safety of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is enabling legislation; that is, it's enabling the parties to actually negotiate and bargain through their own respective essential service piece of legislation. So in Moose Jaw, in Melville, in Swift Current, in Saskatoon we've already seen the successful completion of these negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen through last week is numbers that have been part of a proposal. This proposal is simply a part of negotiations, Mr. Speaker. The Labour Relations Board is the dispute settlement mechanism, Mr. Speaker. We're confident in essential service legislation because it's helping to protect the

health and safety of the people of this province.

The Speaker: — Just to remind members again, according to rule 50(c), members are to refer to other members not by name or personally, but by title, position, or constituency name. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Immunization for H1N1 Influenza

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Saskatchewan started vaccinating front-line health workers. It was reported that Saskatchewan had 112,000 vaccinations available. There are approximately 40,000 health care workers in the province. To the minister: how many vaccinations were given last week? Were all health care workers vaccinated last week that wanted the vaccine?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the rollout of the vaccine started absolutely last Monday, a week ago today, and under the advisement of the chief medical officer and her staff, we followed along with the sequencing of our health care providers throughout the province. So anyone that wanted a vaccination throughout the province that was a health care provider certainly had that opportunity. We've moved past that now, Mr. Speaker, to offering it to children from six months to under five years of age. Those clinics are going on, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — How many?

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Well the member opposite asks how many. Last week we were about 70,000 vaccinations distributed, Mr. Speaker, not only to health care workers, but to many, many communities across northern Saskatchewan. I'd be glad to name them.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, there are health workers who did not get their vaccine last week, and they're calling and saying, why? So I really think the minister better look at his information again because I asked how many of the health workers had been vaccinated. That shouldn't be hard. That shouldn't be hard to find that out.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, there's 40,000 health care workers. Who received the rest of the vaccine last week?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, that all health care providers that wanted to receive a vaccine had the opportunity to. If she knows of some health care providers that weren't able to receive that vaccine last week, I'm sure they'll be made available to receive the vaccine this week, Mr. Speaker, because we know that that is a priority.

What I will do, I will put our disciplined strategy up against any other province, Mr. Speaker, because you're seeing provinces all across Canada moving to where we are right here today, Mr.

Speaker, by prioritizing on a limited amount of vaccines to make sure it goes to the people that need it most, i.e., health care providers.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, late Friday it was announced that the 60,000 vaccinations Saskatchewan was supposed to be getting this week will not be coming. Instead we'll be receiving 13,000, which is less than a quarter of the vaccinations we were expecting. And this begs the question. To the minister: with the dramatic decrease in available vaccinations, who will be getting the vaccine this week? Are high-risk children and pregnant women going to be forced to wait even longer to get the vaccination? And is there a screening process on site to ensure that it will be children between the ages of six months and five years and pregnant women over 20 weeks that are getting the vaccine this week?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer that this week we will be rolling out the vaccine to children from six months to under five years, to women that are pregnant, Mr. Speaker. But what I'm very, very confident in is the discipline that we had last week. We can assure that every one of those children, every one of those pregnant mothers that want a vaccine have the opportunity to receive a vaccine here in Saskatchewan. That isn't the case in every province, Mr. Speaker, as other provinces opened it up to the general public, which is what that member was asking me to do at the university of Saskatoon.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

HealthLine Resources

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the minister just doesn't have a clue. Already last week, the HealthLine was flooded with calls. People were waiting long periods of time to get through. The announcement that we will be receiving less than a quarter of the H1N1 vaccine that we were promised will lead to further increase in demand on the health hotline. With the increased demand for the HealthLine due to H1N1, people calling in with day-to-day concerns are not being adequately served.

The minister has said that he's going to put additional resources into the HealthLine. To the minister, Mr. Speaker: how many new positions are being added to the HealthLine, and what is the minister's acceptable average wait time with these additional positions?

The Speaker: — Order, order. Before I recognize the minister, just another reminder that all comments are to be directed through the Chair and by constituency or title. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — There's a couple of issues here, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the member opposite is correct in the fact

that our vaccinations that we're receiving through the federal government is way down, as it is down in every other province in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's on a per capita basis we are receiving. And I want to assure the general public and this House that we are receiving the appropriate amount of vaccine for the population that we have in Saskatchewan. There is no deals cut between provinces and the federal government. It is a per capita allotment, and that's what we're receiving.

Regarding the HealthLine, Mr. Speaker, I said last week if we see the numbers increasing of calls coming in to the HealthLine — which is welcome, which is what we're asking people to do is to use that HealthLine — we may have to make adjustments, Mr. Speaker.

This week some of those adjustments will be made as we see the volumes increase, such as increasing the number of registered nurses that will be fielding calls regarding health issues. And people that are just phoning for clinic times may be diverted to not a registered nurse, but another employee of the HealthLine.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Options to Expedite Surgical Procedures

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Minister of Health claimed that he knew absolutely nothing about a plan to send surgical patients to British Columbia. Then he even tried to pin the whole thing on the Premier and shove it off in his direction. Finally a senior official admitted that in fact the government has been in discussions with British Columbia about 400 hip replacement surgeries. And a news release by the government just last Thursday confirmed that by saying, and I quote, "McMorris said the Ministry of Health began exploring options over the summer . . ."

So my question's to the minister: just how long has he been planning this? And at a time when money is getting even tighter here in the province, why is the government paying more and a premium to ship patients out of the province than they would be able to provide the care here at home?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say how proud I am of our government and the initiatives that we have taken as a government to reach a target of three months in four years. Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that if that party was in government they would never set a target because, according to the former Health minister, there is no use setting targets because we'd never meet them anyway, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government has set a target. And I had asked the deputy minister to look at options that were available to us to start meeting that target, and he was doing that work. The Premier had talked to the Premier of British Columbia and looked at possibilities. Because what we want to do, before we eliminate some things, we want to put everything on the table to see what makes sense and what doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

I will admit that phone calls were made to British Columbia through an assistant deputy minister, talking about whether there was any capacity or not. There's no use putting it on the table if we don't know whether they had any capacity, Mr. Speaker. So those discussions were under way, Mr. Speaker, and when it came to any sort of decision-making part, we definitely would have been involved.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that the minister at least read his briefing book over the weekend. But he claimed to be out of the loop on this whole process. But yet what we're hearing from British Columbia, from the Minister of Health, he's been clearly briefed, fully briefed, and is ready to sign on the dotted line. He told the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] that Saskatchewan approached British Columbia and that "we are having a discussion with them." Something that sounds like a little more than one random phone call.

He says BC [British Columbia] will charge a premium that will, and I quote, "allow us to use those dollars to allow British Columbians who may be waiting to get their surgeries done."

So again, Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: given that BC recently cancelled thousands of surgeries, this sounds like it could be one hefty premium charged to Saskatchewan. How much is Saskatchewan prepared to pay BC for these surgeries?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me help the member along . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, let me help the member along with her conspiracy theory, if I can. Mr. Speaker, this notion of the province of Saskatchewan exploring, as a last option, the chance to send those who've been waiting in some cases a year for the surgery they need, it happened at this level, Mr. Speaker. It happened at the premiers' level at the Western premiers' meeting in Yukon. I raised it with the Premier of NDP Manitoba. I raised it with the Premier of Alberta. I talked . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I talked to the Premier of British Columbia. I said, you know, in Saskatchewan we're still not doing very well in terms of orthopedics; we need to do better for our citizens who have been waiting for months for surgery. And I told them we're exploring all of the options. I've asked the Minister of Health to explore all of the options.

The first choice is to build capacity in the province. The very first choice is to build capacity in the province. The second

choice is to be open, Mr. Speaker, to potential private clinics who come in on an itinerant basis and help people. And a third option may be to provide that guarantee by offering out-of-province solution. Because here's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker: this government will put those waiting for surgery ahead of politics and ideology every single time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, this Premier has talked for many, many years about the patient-first review. That's what he hung his hat on. Well he gets the Patient First Review which talks about ambulatory care, the surgical centres — wonderful report — and then what do they do? Three days later they yank the funding from it and say, oh gee.

But in the meantime, they've been talking to British Columbia about paying a premium to ship people across the country to get their services done instead of investing in services here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister: why did the government cut funding for a solution that would have allowed patients to receive care that they need closer to home? And why is he paying more to create a two tiered health system by sending people who can afford it off to British Columbia?

The Speaker: — I'd ask members to be mindful of the rule. I know it's something we've kind of worked with, but to refer directly by he or she is unacceptable according to the rules that were . . . And we're going back a number of years to how other Speakers have approached the subject of determining the first person.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. We welcome the debate. The government has set a bold goal in terms of three months for people to wait for surgical time, Mr. Speaker.

The priority in terms of the government dealing with it include the following: number one, we want to seek to build capacity within the province of Saskatchewan to meet that three-month target for people waiting for surgery.

Number two, we may have to bring in private operators to do this on an itinerant basis. We might bring them into the province. We may use operating theatres in places like Yorkton and Prince Albert and Swift Current, if we're short of operating theatres.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, if we have to, to meet our target, what we will say to those who've been waiting months for surgery, we will say, lookit, there may be another option, possibly another option, if we can't meet the need in the province. You deserve the surgery, we will say to them. We may have to look at giving them the choice of going to another province, Mr. Speaker. And you're right. The reason that the members opposite would never ever, ever, ever contemplate this is because they were more concerned about process and the system than the patient.

I welcome the debate, Mr. Speaker, because people across this province have said, 19 months is too long to wait. They deserve surgery, Mr. Speaker. And under this plan, that's exactly what they'll get.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — The Premier recently said that, do people care if surgery happens in Regina, Saskatoon, or Surrey? Well the people that we're talking to do care. Because just the other day . . . You know, the Premier offers the debate. Mr. Speaker, we aren't afraid of the debate, but we'd like some clear facts, for one thing. The Premier talks about in his media comments having out-of-province review of travel expenses. And then the Minister of Health in a question the other day says, oh no, it was out of country, not out of province. You can't get a straight answer from anyone, Mr. Speaker.

And to the minister: not everyone can afford to pay for the cost of travel or accommodation out of the province. So that means that this government is paying a premium to move people who can afford it to the front of the line. And how is this not creating a two-tier medical system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, here's a couple of points. This is a good debate to have. I'm glad the member's asking the question. Here's a couple of points.

Number one, number one, there have been reciprocal agreements with other provinces when that party was in power for years. And they sent people out of province when treatment wasn't available in Saskatchewan. That's point number one.

Point number two, if geography is the definition of a couple of tiers, Mr. Speaker, under that party, as they closed rural hospitals and as they shut down the Plains, there was one tier of health care if you lived in Consul and another if you lived in a major centre, Mr. Speaker, when it came to travel.

And finally here's the worst tier of all. This is the NDP tier of health care. The worst tier of all is waiting 19 months for surgery, regardless of where you live. That's unacceptable and it's going to change in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Release of Information

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, can the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing confirm that from the moment the issue of the dangerous sex offender was made known — who was released to the public last Thursday — he has been conducting an extensive witch hunt trying to find out who provided us this information, trying to track down the person or persons who felt the public needed to be informed about this threat to public safety?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can definitely advise that it's very concerning to me as the minister as to how the member from Dewdney came into contact with confidential, highly confidential and sensitive information. It's just as concerning to me that the member would like to use that for political sensationalism.

I think the real question, the real question here is, how did the member from Regina Dewdney come into possession of these files? Will he give them back? And will he disclose who gave them to him?

It's also very concerning, it's also very concerning to me, Mr. Speaker, that we wonder how many files, how many confidential files that that member from Dewdney has in his possession.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing should understand that the public had a right to know this information, and that anyone who helped ensure the public was informed was acting in the public interest under the full protection of our whistle-blower legislation.

Can the minister confirm that the person or persons responsible for helping to make this information public will face no sanctions from the minister or the government?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that a CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing] employee has been put on administrative leave while an investigation is being conducted into how, how confidential documents got into the hands of the member opposite. And I can also advise you that we're taking this situation very seriously and there will be a full investigation conducted.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's also very worthy to note that a member of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing takes an oath of office when they take a job there and I would like . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from that oath, and I quote, "That I will not use or disclose any matter or information that comes to my knowledge by reason of my employment, including personal information about any individual . . ."

And the member from Regina Dewdney should know that, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask again if he has documents, confidential documents in his possession, that they be returned.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing: will he confirm that the individuals or individual who may have provided information will not be sanctioned as a result of protecting the public of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, what I will comment on is that I'm very, very concerned about how the files got into the hands of the member from Regina Dewdney.

And I would also like to bring to the attention of the House a letter that was sent from the deputy minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to the member from Dewdney asking for a return of the files, the confidential files that the member was waving around in the foyer the other day. And the question to the member from Regina Dewdney is, will he return those files?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 101 — *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 101 . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 101, *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill No. 101, *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I think members can appreciate, even for Clerks at the Table when we're trying to go through the business, that if there's a lot of dialogue across the floor it's hard to hear, even though this Chamber does carry sound very well. So I would ask members to recognize that and show the respect for the individual who happens to be speaking. I invite the Clerk to proceed.

Bill No. 102 — *The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2009*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 102, *The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2009* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill No. 102, *The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 103 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Professional Discipline) Amendment Act, 2009*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 103, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Professional Discipline) Amendment Act, 2009* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill No. 103, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Professional Discipline) Amendment Act, 2009* be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 104 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2009 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 104,

The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2009 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill No. 104, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2009 (No. 2)* be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Question of Privilege

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I have a response to a question that was brought to my office this morning. Earlier today the Opposition House Leader raised the question of privilege under the provisions of Rule 12 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*. Upon receipt of the notice, in accordance with the rules, both House Leaders were informed of the details of the case and the proposed question of privilege.

It is the responsibility of the Speaker to determine if a prima facie case of privilege has been established. Contempt of the Assembly is a serious charge which requires careful examination of the case and this Assembly's practices and precedents.

I wish to inform the Assembly that I have not had sufficient time to reach a decision on this question, so for this reason I shall defer my judgment until the conclusion of routine proceedings and before orders of the day tomorrow.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 1 through 116.

The Speaker: — Questions 1 through 116 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answers 117 through 120 ordered.

The Speaker: — Questions 117 through 120 ordered. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answer to question 121.

The Speaker: — Answer to question 121 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Answers to questions 122 and 123 are ordered.

The Speaker: — Questions 122, 123 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answers to questions 124 through 126.

The Speaker: — Questions 124 through 126 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Answers to questions 127 and 128 are ordered.

The Speaker: — 127 and 128 ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answers to questions 129 through 134.

The Speaker: — 129 through 134 tabled.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — The question to 135 is ordered.

The Speaker: — 135 ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answers to questions 136 through 142.

The Speaker: — Questions 136 through 142 tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by the Hon. Mr. McMorris, seconded by Ms. Ross, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Lingenfelter.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back up on my feet here today to speak to the Speech from the Throne. As you know, I had given some comments at the conclusion of business Thursday, and I'm going to be continuing with my speech.

It really is a true honour to rise to speak today to respond to our government's Speech from the Throne, an excellent Speech from the Throne. The speech made abundantly clear what many Saskatchewan people know: our province is moving forward.

When I meet with people in our cities, towns, villages, and RMs [rural municipality] all across our province, there's tremendous optimism. I'm not sure we felt this kind of optimism all that often, if ever, before in our great province. It's been generated by Saskatchewan people, helped by the work of our government over the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, as the Speech from the Throne made clear, our government has responded to long-standing needs for infrastructure with record investments in municipalities throughout our province. To help municipalities meet the needs of their citizens, our government introduced a historic commitment to tie municipal operating grants to revenue received through the provincial sales tax, making the grants more predictable for municipalities preparing their budgets and more aligned with the province's economy.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to work with municipalities throughout Saskatchewan, with all stakeholder organizations and agencies, to ensure we have a strong and open relationship and are accountable to the people of Saskatchewan. It all helps our province build on its momentum to keep our province moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech describes how we will move forward by continuing our successful nursing recruitment initiatives, work hard to retain medical school graduates, and recruit physicians. Our government will, this session, respond to the recommendations of the Patient First Review and address the surgical backlog. Over the next four years, we will reduce surgical wait times to no longer than three months. It's a giant move forward for people in all of Saskatchewan's municipalities. We're also committing to taking positive steps to reduce drug use and break the cycle of addiction. It all helps the people in Saskatchewan's municipalities move forward.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, will invest in education infrastructure in communities and continue its commitment to improving over 230 schools in every part of Saskatchewan. These investments in Saskatchewan people, investments that help everyone move forward.

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to helping our province's most vulnerable children with \$25 million in funding set aside to improve the child welfare system. Our government will put forward laws to protect citizens by banning texting and hand-held cellphone usage while driving. And we will continue to work towards our commitment to put an additional 120 officers in place throughout the province.

Our support for the agricultural sector's strong. The AgriStability program is moving to Melville, and our government is providing \$70 million in direct support to livestock producers through the cattle and hog support program.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to work with First Nations and Métis people on developing guidelines on Saskatchewan's duty to consult. We will continue to work on a new environmental regulatory framework and present a comprehensive water management plan.

Our government will commit to increased wind power, to innovation, and to continuing hearings on Saskatchewan's

energy future. We'll continue to improve our parks for the benefit of all in our province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've set a goal to open our doors to more immigration, just as Saskatchewan opened its doors over a century ago. Our government will reduce processing times for immigration. We have a goal of attracting 3,400 nominations through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program.

The initiatives our government will undertake will help our province grow. Saskatchewan is moving forward. Our province is growing, and, Mr. Speaker, the signs of growth are everywhere. Just two months ago, the towns of Meadow Lake and Martensville — my hometown of Meadow Lake — became a city. Our province hasn't added two cities in one year since 1913. And not a word of support from the opposition opposite.

Adding cities is a clear example of a province experiencing growth. Another strong signal is population. Between July 1st, 2008 and July 1st, 2009, Saskatchewan's population grew by 16,509 people. Mr. Speaker, it's the largest population increase in any 12-month period in our province since 1953, more than 50 years ago.

Our province's economy is strong. As we emerge from a worldwide recession, economic strength that helped Saskatchewan through the downturn means our province is in a strong position, ready for growth. Last month, Mr. Speaker, the Dominion Bond Rating Service granted the Government of Saskatchewan a credit upgrade from AA low to AA.

Saskatchewan's unemployment rate, 4.6 per cent, is the lowest in the country. Regina and Saskatoon have the lowest unemployment rates of all major cities in Canada. It means, as our country's economy recovers, our province has an advantage. Our economy will continue to build momentum.

Over the past two years, our Saskatchewan Party government has worked on getting the fundamentals of a good economy right. We lowered property taxes. We lowered income taxes, taking 80,000 people off the tax rolls. And, Mr. Speaker, we've invested in infrastructure. We see evidence of the success of those investments. In July, Saskatchewan recorded the second highest percentage increase in building permits in Canada — a 57.5 per cent increase from June to 215.5 million.

[14:30]

In the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, under the Building Canada plan, the provincial and federal governments together have committed over \$645 million, from 2008-09 through 2013-14, to more than 300 projects in communities throughout Saskatchewan.

You will also recall the Premier making the commitment in February 2009 to provide a \$500 million economic booster shot for our province. It was designed to accelerate capital spending to hospitals, schools, on highways, and for municipalities. Mr. Speaker, our government and our ministry were able to provide \$100 million quickly to all municipalities on a per capita basis through the municipal economic enhancement program. These dollars mean jobs in communities, dollars for suppliers in the service industry throughout Saskatchewan.

Over the past two years, Mr. Speaker, our provincial government has committed an unprecedented \$2.5 billion in capital investment for schools, hospitals, roads, and municipal infrastructure. The investment means cleaner drinking water for Saskatchewan families, safer roads for all travellers, and increased recreational opportunities.

Beyond infrastructure, our government saw the advantage of tying municipal operating grants to the provincial sales tax, making the grant more predictable and linked to the overall growth of the economy of the province. It means substantial increases and a break from past practices. It means we work with our municipal sector partners to arrive at a solution that would work. It means, Mr. Speaker, that we were able to help municipalities budget for the service the citizens needed.

In the 2009-10 provincial budget, municipal operating grants rose 24 per cent to over \$167 million. These investments in municipalities are important. Dollars are the catalyst, but how do we ensure investments meet the needs of Saskatchewan people? How do we ensure that what we are investing in provides for future growth? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is in listening to what our constituents want. The answer is in thoughtful, careful planning for growth in all of our municipalities.

Whether it's WaterWolf and the 40-plus municipalities setting out a plan and jointly hiring resources to grow their future; or the village of Meota and the resort villages of Metinota, Lakeview, and Suttons Beach working together on sewage lagoon expansion; or the Dundurn water facility that brings water to the towns of Dundurn and Hanley as well as Blackstrap Provincial Park, Canadian Forces Base Dundurn, Beaver Creek, Riverside and rural subscribers, it shows planning when done right can be successful.

Our Saskatchewan Party government supports, with our municipal partners, an outcome-driven approach to regulation and to planning. Mr. Speaker, we all have a responsibility to ensure safe and secure communities and regions that offer a full suite of services and opportunities to be a place where people want to live.

I spoke recently at the Provincial Association of Resort Communities' annual convention and told them how two RMs got funding on behalf of resort hamlets — the RM of Coteau to clay cap a road to Hitchcock Bay, and the RM of Mervin for a water treatment plant at Sunset View beach. These are good examples of municipalities working together.

Mr. Speaker, our government will keep working to sustain growth to keep Saskatchewan moving forward. It's why our government-to-government relationship with municipalities is so important. We need to be open to new ways of doing things, including new approaches.

Working together, we can create more jobs and build more liveable communities. Working together, we will ensure Saskatchewan keeps moving forward. Working together, Mr. Speaker, our government will achieve shorter wait times for surgery. Our government will recruit more physicians and retain more health care workers. Working with all Saskatchewan people, our government will continue to invest in education,

invest and plan in our municipalities to keep Saskatchewan moving forward.

I will be voting against the amendment and in favour of the Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a great privilege for me to participate in the Throne Speech debate today. I was thinking back over the last number of years, and I've had less and less opportunity to speak. But there's so much to address as part of the response to the Throne Speech that I'm glad for this opportunity today.

Unfortunately I've already been informed that my time's going to be restricted to about 20 minutes. And most of my colleagues know that I hardly am able to say my name and where I'm from in 20 minutes. But nevertheless we'll do the best we can with the time we're given.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say off the top . . . and it's not simply formality. It's genuine. I've heard many of the colleagues in the House make reference to the people who support them from the constituency, particularly the constituency assistants that work on their behalf. I am fortunate to have three individuals who work on a job-sharing basis in the constituency office in Cypress Hills. We've had this team together for a couple of years now.

My lead constituency assistant is Beth Humphrey. She joined my staff almost nine years ago, and she's been a real steadfast support and a wealth of assistance in so many different ways to me personally but more importantly to the constituents who call the office regarding a variety of concerns that are raised from day to day. But we also have two others ladies who work on a less rigorous schedule. One lady's in one day a week. The other is in two days a week. And I'm referring to Glenna Gordon and Carol Miller, the most recent addition to my office. And these individuals have supported our office complement in a very significant way. They each bring their own strengths to the office. And across the piece, I depend on them entirely for the success of our constituent activity. And I'm very grateful to them.

I also want to acknowledge again the love and support of my wife. You know, Mr. Speaker, when I ran — and I think I probably repeated this story previously — but when I first decided to run, my wife was the individual who gave me the motivation and the confidence. She said that if I chose to do this, she would support me. There was a little trepidation in her voice when she said that, but she gave me the assurance that she would support me.

The other thing, the motivating part of the decision was when she said, if you don't get off the couch and quit complaining about what's happening politically, I don't want to hear about it anymore. So that was enough motivation for me to say this is an opportunity; this is an event that I need to pursue. And with her support and the support of many other individuals throughout the constituency, I got off the couch and put my name on a ballot.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've never regretted it whatsoever. This position has offered me greater opportunity and greater privilege than I could have imagined 11 years ago when I made that decision. And this year I'm celebrating my 10th anniversary as a member in this legislature, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me by the citizens of the great region of southwest Saskatchewan known as Cypress Hills.

I want to welcome — while I'm on my introduction — I want to welcome the additions, the two members that have come into the House just most recently.

The member from Riversdale is brand new to the Assembly. We welcome her. I know that she's going to find her time here very rewarding. It's going to be challenging. There are going to be immense pressures on her time. And with a young family, I know that she's going to try and do the best she can to balance her work life circumstances. But I wish her well. And although we will disagree philosophically many times I'm sure, that's not really the issue. The issue is the enthusiasm and the integrity you bring to the House and the determination with which you pursue your efforts on behalf of your constituents. So I'd like to welcome her.

And for the member . . . I almost said the new member from Regina Douglas Park. I guess the constituency's right, but referring to him as new is not the most appropriate designation. The most recent member from Douglas Park, we've known each other over the last number of years. He, in some instances, is a constituent of mine and I try to represent his concerns and needs whenever it's appropriate. And in other instances, we have been colleagues. But contemporaries might be the best way to describe our relationship here.

When I was first elected, the now Leader of the Opposition was a member in this House. He was serving as deputy premier at the time, and actually I think he used a line in the House one time that stuck with me. It was really quite original. There was an individual standing in the House here giving a very long-winded, laborious speech. It went on and on and on. And when that individual stopped for a glass of water, just a quick drink, the then deputy premier said, first time I ever saw a windmill run on water.

And you know, I liked that line so much I waited almost 10 years to use it. And I took the advantage to use it against one of the current members in the opposition last year during debate, and everything stopped in the House. So it was a very good line and I thank him for the use of it, although I didn't ask permission. I think repetition and copying that is the highest sense of flattery really.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to stand and talk about Speech from the Throne 2009 titled, "Moving Forward." Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to be fairly broad ranging in my comments today because I think that the opportunities given to members to reply to this particular speech are quite diverse. They can be wide-ranging. We're not focusing on one specific piece of information or one Bill, and we're not required to be completely focused on any given item. So I want to talk quite a bit about where this speech came from, the importance of it to the people of Saskatchewan, and where it points, what

trajectory it suggests for this government as we move forward in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, we are, as a government and as a province and as a people, moving forward. This Speech from the Throne, the title of which is emblazoned on the front page, is a clear road map of the government's intention. And I heard a member from the opposition say the problem with this speech is that it's just a rehash of a whole litany of previous promises and doesn't say much about where it's going. In fact it talks more about the past than it talks about the future. Well the past for this government is very brief. It's a mere two years. And while this speech does contain quite a bit of information on promises made and what our goals and objectives had been as part of our election platform leading up to the 2007 election, the more important part of that record is the fact that we have achieved a vast number of things in our first two years.

Mr. Speaker, never in the history of this province for sure, maybe not in elected history ever, has a government completed and fulfilled and implemented well over 100 of its election promises within the first 24 months. That is historic, Mr. Speaker, and it's worth repeating in this particular document because of the historicity and because of the significance of this particular government's achievement over the first two years of its mandate. Mr. Speaker, if we had achieved less, we'd have said less. And the fact of the matter is that we can point very clearly to over 100 election promises kept to date.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the good news for the people of Saskatchewan is that, given our record, given our history, given the fact that this government has kept its word, that's a fairly significant and promising indication of where this government will go in the future. A government whose record is based on accomplishment is likely to continue accomplishing good things on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, and I think that's what's important about this particular speech. While there are not a lot of specific items identified for future engagement and future introduction, the people of Saskatchewan can be reasonably certain, in fact given the history, they can be deadly certain that this government will do what it says it will do. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what makes this document so valuable in terms of where we're at politically in this province.

Mr. Speaker, you know I could spend quite a bit of time comparing the short, two-year record of this government to the 16 years of the previous government. We could do that. And if I have enough time left, I might get to that. But, Mr. Speaker, it would be a very paltry comparison when you look at our record in a short term versus the record of the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things, as part of my wide-ranging response, that I'd like to deal with right now is . . . you know I've sat in this House, and I've listened to most of the speeches by members both in the opposition and on the government side. But I was particularly interested in speeches made by the member from Regina Coronation Park and the member from Saskatoon Nutana and the member from Prince Albert Northcote and some comments outside the House by the Leader of the Opposition in which they stood here, in full bluster and loud and excessive language, claiming that for the first time in history, the people of the province — and they were referencing the protesters that were in the front area of the legislative

grounds last week — the first time in history people who are protesting were locked out of their legislature.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, that was the claim that, for the first time ever, people of Saskatchewan were locked out of the legislature. But the accusation didn't end there. The accusation was that they were locked out by the Saskatchewan Party government. And in one instance, they were locked out by the Premier, and by name.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a House where ideas are freely debated back and forth. And many, many facts are debatable. But I think it's important, when you're going to make that kind of an accusation, that there be some substance, some foundation before the accusation, that there be some clearly identifiable, factual relevance and substantiation to that kind of accusation. And I was, I was intrigued by it because, you know, we're a government that's done a lot of things. We've produced a lot of historical firsts in this province. And we're pretty proud of that. But this isn't a first that we would be proud of under any circumstances.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we're not the first. Fact would have it that there has been previous occasions when the doors were locked by the government of the day to keep protesters out of the building. And I thought I'd just check into the background of that particular reality, Mr. Speaker, and as it turns out there is a long-standing agreement that deals with those kinds of situations and how it might be handled in this legislature. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, there is a policy in place that has existed for years and years; we know that it's been in place for more than 15 years, that clearly identifies the role of the independent agencies of this legislature — in this case the Sergeant-at-Arms and his office responsible for security — and the mechanisms that they are allowed to use to make sure that security is accomplished for the legislature, for the building, for the people that work in the building and so forth.

But more interesting than that, Mr. Speaker, is, the policy is a document that has been approved by one of the legislature's own committees. And, Mr. Speaker, the committee that handles this particular activity and makes decisions in this matter is served by members from both sides of the House. So, Mr. Speaker, the Board of Internal Economy — which is the legislative committee that deals with these types of issues, which is a House committee that has representation from both the government and the official opposition — have approved this very document that talks about how demonstrations are to be dealt with.

And I'd like to read some of it into the record, Mr. Speaker. It says here on page 1 that:

The Sergeant-at-Arms shall be responsible for coordinating action taken during demonstrations at the Legislative Building.

The Sergeant-at-Arms . . . shall work with the demonstrators, [with] elected officials, and other building occupants to ensure an orderly assembly.

It goes into several sub-points, but here's something that's really important, Mr. Speaker: "Demonstrating groups shall not be permitted access to the building." Written right into the policy, a policy agreed to by the Board of Internal Economy and subscribed to by the members opposite and members from the government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say the following guidelines must be adhered to by groups demonstrating at the Legislative Building. And it goes on to identify certain criteria that, if met by the protestors, would allow them entrance into the building under very rigorous conditions. And, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite weren't aware of this policy, I'd be surprised because the ones that identified the fact that the building was locked to protestors are among those who've been in this House the longest.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Coronation Park, the member from Nutana, the Leader of the Official Opposition — those three individuals have been around here, some as early as the mid-'70s, some more recently as the early '80s, Mr. Speaker. So if the people in the opposition didn't understand that they were party to this agreement and that these rules were in place, then I don't know how much we can trust their memory on anything.

Mr. Speaker, something else that's quite interesting. The rules here about entry to the building are pretty clear, and we do know that an independent agency has the authority to lock the building up until certain agreements have been reached. But when members of the opposition tried to abrogate the responsibilities of this independent officer and threatened to open the doors against the clear guidelines, Mr. Speaker, that really goes counter to the kind of integrity that this particular Chamber expects and requires of its members.

These rules are put in place, not for our individual benefits, but for the benefit of democracy as a whole. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that members be very prudent about abiding by the very rules that they have agreed to, and in this instance there was an attempt to abrogate those rules. Mr. Speaker, that's unacceptable and unreasonable.

But when the Leader of the Official Opposition was heard on Swift Current radio, Saturday, saying that the government had locked the doors to the people of the province, that is clearly not the case, and he knows it. He's sitting in his seat saying, that's what happened. The government did not do that, and we cannot allow that kind of information to be spread.

Mr. Speaker, I also know, I also know for a fact that the doors to this building were locked on a previous occasion, and that's when farmers from rural Saskatchewan came to this building to protest so much of the agriculture policy of the previous government. And when they protested outside, the doors were locked. By policy, the doors were locked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the doors can be opened, the doors can be opened when agreement is reached by the protestors and the authorities responsible for the security of this building. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, agreement was reached. Mr. Speaker, the galleries were filled with people among the protesting group outside. Mr. Speaker, the door was closed until an arrangement

and agreement could be reached, then the door was opened. That gallery was filled. That gallery was filled. This gallery was filled by members of the protesting group. The only exception were a few other private parties that had come here to observe the proceedings.

So, Mr. Speaker, to say the doors were locked and people were prevented from entering is clearly a distortion of the facts. And I just want to make sure that the record is clearly made in this particular discussion, that if the people of Saskatchewan want to know what happened, that's the reason why it happened as it did.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that has come to my attention is related, I guess, in some respect. And that is selective memory, I guess you'd call it, because I've also heard many members of the opposition over the last number of days say, where's the money gone? Where's the money gone, as though it might have disappeared.

You know, what I find really interesting, Mr. Speaker, is when that question is asked and an answer is provided, they only remember the part of the question that was asked, not the answer. And it seems to me that selective memory and/or selective hearing is at play here. Now I know about selective hearing; I've been accused of it myself by my wife once in a while. But for political purposes, you know, it's a game that's played.

Well if the question is where has the money gone, maybe I could take a few minutes to say, I'll give the answer. We'll put the answer on the record.

One of the places the money went was \$2.7 billion to debt reduction. Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty significant sum to misplace. It's a pretty significant sum to ignore. And it's clearly a sum that is very important to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I know over the years how significant the accumulated debt in this province impacted both the activity of the government and impacted the psychology of the people of the province. Everybody in this province was aware of the significant debt this province carried.

But now that this government has been able to take its good fortune — and that's what it was, was good fortune — and apply large sums of it to the accumulated debt, you'd think that the opposition would be quite happy about that. They were the ones that used the so-called Devine debt as a cudgel over the people of Saskatchewan to win elections and make their political points.

Now that the debt is being paid off, now that the debt is being reduced dramatically — and who's ever heard of a \$2.7 billion debt paydown in a short time like we've just experienced? — now that it's happened, they ask the question, where'd the money go? Well the money went to the provincial debt, a good part of it.

Where did some of the other money go, Mr. Speaker? Well it went to a variety of things. It went to infrastructure. We've never seen infrastructure investment in this province like we have in the last two years — \$2.5 billion of infrastructure spending in highways, in schools. It went to hospitals, health

care facilities. It went to student housing at the University of Saskatchewan. A hundred and fifty million dollars into general post-secondary educational capital expenditures, whether at universities or SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] or junior colleges around the province.

Mr. Speaker, this province has never seen as much capital expenditure in one short period of time as this government has provided for the province in the last 24 months.

Mr. Speaker, where did the money go? Well the money went to people who were, because of circumstances beyond their own control, they were living in difficult financial circumstances. We've certainly seen a lot of money go into seniors' support programs. We've put it into housing programs. We've put it into loans for students. We increased student loan programs. Mr. Speaker, we have taken the money that was left to us and the money that was generated as a matter of course when we took office, and we have spent that on programs that will benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't a single investment that we have made that is to the benefit of anybody but the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it has gone right across the spectrum of constituencies. It's gone right across the spectrum of socio-economic groups. It's gone across the spectrum of urban and rural areas. It's gone to the people of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I can only say that if the previous government had done just a fraction of what this government has done in terms of infrastructure spending, we wouldn't have had this huge deficit to overcome that we've been dealing with the last number of months.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about roadways in particular because being a representative of a rural constituency, roads are among the most important investments government can make. And, Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity to address a very specific infrastructure issue: Highway 32, the infamous Highway 32, that was so bad it provoked local citizens into the creation of a nude calendar. And, Mr. Speaker, when that nude calendar was brought to the attention of the House, it became a *cause célèbre* and went around the world actually. Stories about that calendar were published in languages that I've never even seen before.

But what arose out of that, Mr. Speaker, was a very clear awareness that this province had a huge shortfall in infrastructure investment. And Highway 32, that runs from the community of Leader to the city of Swift Current, was in such a sad state of repair that . . . Well, one guy in the calendar actually was canoeing in one of the potholes. And we had a duck blind in another pothole. Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a truly outlandish, quite humorous project, but it really drew attention to that highway. And as a result of this government's commitment to infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan, Highway 32 will be completely rebuilt within three years, and the people of that north part of the constituency of Cypress Hills are thrilled to death.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's important to them for economic reasons. It's important to them for social reasons. But it's even more important for health reasons because so many of the people that

are served by the hospital and the ambulance service in Leader need to be transferred in to the hospital at Swift Current, and because of the condition of the road weren't able to go directly. They had to go south on Highway 21 to Maple Creek and then back east on Highway No. 1 into the city of Swift Current, and that added a lot of precious time to an ambulance run.

And I think that that reality is one of the most telling problems with decaying highways in rural Saskatchewan: it really seriously impacts on the delivery of health in a timely manner to people who are transferred from community to a hospital at some distance away.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is another piece of highway infrastructure in my constituency that got attention this year. Highway 37 from the Frenchman River Valley south to the community of Climax is a stretch of about 7 or 8 miles that was a goat trail, really. It wasn't very good. The road from Shaunavon down to the Frenchman River Valley had been done previously, and it was pretty good. But from there south, from the valley south to Climax, it was a terrible piece of road. And worse than anything, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the people who lived along that road, the communities that were served by that highway had been set up for disappointment so many times in years previous.

[15:00]

As it turns out, my uncle lives along that road. And when he saw the surveyors out there staking that highway for a rebuild project this year, he said to me, is this for real? And I said, you bet your boots. You can count on us. We've committed to doing that road. And he said, I'm going to have to wait until I see the earthmoving equipment here to believe that, because for almost 40 years we have seen surveyors come out here half a dozen times, survey this road, leave the stakes in the ground, disappear. And our hopes have been raised and dropped so dramatically so many times we do not believe this project will be reality. Now, Mr. Speaker, that was my uncle. If he's that skeptical about what I tell him, you can imagine what the rest of the people felt.

So when we actually got earthmoving equipment out there, when we actually saw activity in the area, when we saw a huge pile of gravel being crushed in preparation for this project, it was as though their excitement could not be contained, because at last somebody had made them a promise and somebody was keeping a promise. And, Mr. Speaker, that again is an indication of our trustworthiness as a government and our commitment to the people of the province. And that's why this "Moving Forward" document, this Throne Speech is so believable for the people of Saskatchewan because they know we have made promises and kept them, and they're aware of the fact that we will keep our promises going into the future.

Mr. Speaker, we spent a lot of money — in answer to the question, where's the money gone — we spent a lot of money on infrastructure for communities. I'm talking about new schools. The community of Maple Creek is getting a new school as part of their complex there. We're putting money into repair projects on schools that were so long overdue that roofs which had leaked into buckets for years and years, where black mould had started to take hold, are now being repaired.

Mr. Speaker, a new hospital, a new health care facility, in Maple Creek is going to become a reality in the next year or two. The last facility, which was built in the early '60s, the nurses had to walk around buckets in the halls to collect the water off a leaking flat roof.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Maple Creek are going to benefit from this government's initiatives on their behalf in a significant way because that facility will be built. It will replace two aging facilities — a health care facility and a seniors' nursing home. We'll put that under one roof. We'll provide better and more directed care. It's going to be easier to manage, easier to operate having the facilities united like that. But more importantly, it will give a level of optimism and an opportunity for the people of Maple Creek to be better served by the medical practitioners that are going to be practicing out of that new facility. So, Mr. Speaker, those are just two examples in one community.

The community of Frontier, we shared in the cost of a new cement floor for their rec centre. The local community had great pride in their rec centre and had found themselves in need of an upgrade. And they raised some money there, and they got some local contributions, and the provincial government and the federal government came to the table. And they're getting a new cement surface for their arena to make it more usable for a variety of causes and events year round. That had been pretty limited previously by the dirt floor.

In the community of Fox Valley, we've got money going in there so they can be wheelchair accessible to their arena, and so that the visiting team and the home team's dressing rooms are in better shape, and that access by spectators would be improved.

The community of Richmond accepted some money that our government provided as part of this question, where did the money go? And they decided at their RM facility to install a very sophisticated geothermal system. So they're removing their antiquated air conditioner and their furnace and they are going to be depending on this newly installed geothermal heating and cooling system.

The community of Leader saw some money from us as well. The community of Hazlet is going to be benefiting from some of the programs that we have created for infrastructure. The list is just endless, Mr. Speaker. And if that's the kind of impact that these expenditures are having in the constituency of Cypress Hills, you can imagine, spreading that kind of largesse and that kind of programming to communities all across the province, what the impact would be.

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure spending I guess I'm most proud of however is, province wide, the highways and bridges. Now the Minister of Highways alluded to a number of them but I just want to recite some statistics, if I may. In the first two years of our government, we have done more work on highways than any previous administration ever. Now, Mr. Speaker, \$1.1 billion — was a little more than that — invested in highways and bridges. And in each year, more than 1380 kilometres of work was done on a highway somewhere in this province. Mr. Speaker, if you add that up, that's 27 . . . Is it 2700? Well 2800 kilometres of work. There's 26 000 kilometres of highway in

the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, even though we have put more money in a more focused and deliberate way into the highways of this province, even though we have focused very clearly on new construction and an increased repair agenda and a maintenance agenda, at 27, 2800 kilometres of work, you know, we're only 10 per cent of the way to the full job, 26 000 kilometres of road in this province. And even with maximum investment, we're still only a little better than 10, 11 per cent, 12 per cent into the cycle.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do, but the people of Saskatchewan are seeing one thing. They see a change. They see a commitment to rural highways. They see new roads, new pavement, upgraded repairs, new bridges, new activity on highways in areas of this province where they'd never seen it before. And, Mr. Speaker, we're pretty proud of the results to date.

Is there more work to do? You bet. There's a lot of work we need to do in the North yet. And we're working on a northern transportation strategy that will clearly articulate which roads need to be fixed on what timetable and to what extent, similar to the rolling, five-year plan that we implemented in southern Saskatchewan. Can we do it all next year? Can we do it all in the first term of our government? Probably not, Mr. Speaker, but the people of the province can see that there is good work being done, and they appreciate the fact that we took their concerns seriously and we're moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say quite a bit about the agricultural agenda of this government. I understand the Minister of Agriculture, who spoke previously, detailed in quite a significant way some of the programs that we've already undertaken, and so did my colleague, the member from Thunder Creek.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think there's one area that I'd like to focus on, and that is the movement of some of the programming from the federal government to the provincial government's purview. We noticed how effective that kind of a change had been in Alberta and in other jurisdictions around the country, and we thought it's time that Saskatchewan — which is home to the largest land base for agriculture and the single largest number of farmers in the nation — it's time that we in Saskatchewan did something like that.

And the benefit, Mr. Speaker, will be that Saskatchewan people with a farm background will be able to answer the questions of the very farmer customers that they are to serve. And, Mr. Speaker, that makes such a difference. You and I are probably as familiar as anybody of some of the absurdities that were given out as answers to farmers when they called urban centres down east someplace looking for information on their farm programs.

Having that capability in the province of Saskatchewan will not only be less expensive ultimately, but it will be much more factual and we'll be able to direct information in a more timely manner and it will provide programming response when it's needed to the participants in our agriculture programs much more effectively. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that's an important change.

The other thing that's really important for our producers around the province is the fact that we finally addressed the education portion of property tax. This is an issue that's been talked about by the previous administration, by NDP administrations right back to the day of Tommy Douglas. And it took a Saskatchewan Party government to do it.

Mr. Speaker, it's going to take a Saskatchewan Party government to do a lot of things that the NDP thought about and talked about. But on this front, we're going to be doing the important changes to the education portion of property tax that has been talked about and promised and agonized over by previous administrations for years and years. Not just years and years, Mr. Speaker, decades and decades. And so it took a Saskatchewan Party government to take that problem seriously and move on it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a record on which we are very proud to stand. And one of the things that I think will indicate the changing dynamic, the changing reality in this province — a reality, a changing reality which members of the opposition haven't even caught on to yet . . . One of the most significant things in my mind, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to use this to conclude my comments, but this in my mind indicates the changing reality in this province.

When we sat in the opposition benches, the Minister of Education in those years used to talk about the planned loss of 30,000 public school students in a decade. They used to talk about the declining population in schools all across the province, nowhere more real than in rural Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, imagine the despondency that that would create in a population to say, we are planning for the loss of 36,000 students in the public school system this decade.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to hear from our Minister of Education that this year for the first time in I don't know how long we have seen a growth in student numbers in this province. Mr. Speaker, it's a small number — it's 361 students — but it's heading in the right direction. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to say that that's the new reality in Cypress Hills as well.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here with much more material to present to the people of this province. I have more things to say on behalf of my constituents, but we've run out of time, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to say that I will not be supporting the amendment when it comes that time to vote, but I certainly will be supporting the Speech from the Throne.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, it is both a privilege and an honour to participate in my first response to the Throne Speech. I'm going to start today by thanking some very important people. I'm going to tell you a little bit about my constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale. I'm going to tell you a little bit about myself, why I'm here, and what I hope to accomplish in this job. And in conclusion, I'll tell you what I think about this Throne Speech.

First I want to extend my congratulations to the new member

from Regina Douglas Park, the Leader of the Opposition. I didn't know him or his family until just a few months ago, but through the by-election and now in caucus, I've gotten to know him and I've grown to like him and respect him very much. We come from different generations and I think we have different political styles, but we share many common beliefs among New Democrats. We both believe that this province is a wonderful place to call home, and every citizen deserves to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to share in all that Saskatchewan has to offer.

Before I say much else, there is a long list of people I want to thank, starting with the voters of Saskatoon Riversdale. Over the course of several months, I knocked on almost every door in the constituency and got to talk to many people. There was not a day that went by that I did not meet someone for whom my reasons for running weren't reaffirmed.

For the tenants in the apartments on Pendency Road whose rents have almost doubled in two years and who many can no longer make ends meet. For the young woman from Vancouver Island who moved here with her boyfriend because she had heard of the Saskaboom and hoped they would find jobs, only to discover that things weren't quite as rosy as they'd been led to believe. For the young couple who, despite being eligible for parental leave benefits through employment insurance, could not take full advantage of it because they couldn't afford to live on half of one of their salaries for the full year, so they were both back at work full-time before their baby was nine months old.

For the senior who asked me to fight to raise the threshold for prescription drug coverage because, even though his income looked reasonable on paper, his drug costs were breaking the bank. For the mother on social assistance who said she wanted to work but she couldn't leave social assistance because her husband's costly prescriptions were covered on SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] but not if she joined the ranks of the working poor. For the mother who had to turn down a job that paid better than her current position because it involved weekend work, and her subsidized child care was only offered during the standard workweek.

These are just a few of those voices that need to be heard in this legislature. I will make sure that I'm reflecting their concerns, and I will hope that you will make sure that you're listening.

[15:15]

Aside from the voters in my constituency, there are many, many others, as I said, that I want to thank. I want to start with my campaign manager, Tim Williams. This was my first campaign and I was a total rookie, but I did realize my job was to be on the doorstep. And Tim did everything humanly possible to support me to get out on the doorstep, whether it was making sure that I had my chai latte on my canvassing breaks or from stocking the fridge for my vegetarian emergencies, and reassuring me that I wasn't a diva just because I needed to have my clothes taken to the laundromat or to the dry cleaner so I could be on the doorstep. Thank you so much, Tim.

I want to thank Linsay who helped me with my nomination by-election campaign literature, despite his own really, really

busy schedule. There were others who helped out right from the beginning with the nomination: Eric, Rob, Dave, Gord, and Michael. Thank you.

During the campaign I had amazing volunteers from Saskatoon Riversdale, all over the city, and all over the province for that matter. Our phone and foot canvassers did a wonderful job: Sandy, Frank, Don, Greg, Dolores, and Jean, and there's so many others. But they were just a few people who put in almost as much work as I did into this campaign.

Grant, Jacquie, and George — no one could ask for a better sign crew.

To all the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] who were out with me on a very regular basis, thank you so much. I want to and need to extend a special thank-you to the member from Massey Place who spent an inordinate amount of time on the doorstep with me. One would have thought it was his own riding on the line if you would have seen the pace that he kept. Thank you so much.

My constituency assistants are wonderful — Yvonne and Tammy. Thank you so much for helping getting me organized and to assist me in learning about my new roles and responsibilities.

Now the most important people I need to thank is my very large and very supportive family. As a mom of two young kids, I could not do this job without the kind of support with which my family is providing me.

My husband Blair, who is a total political animal himself, agreed to put his own desire to be actively involved in the nuts and bolts of the campaign aside so I could focus on the campaign and he could focus on Hennessey and Ophelia. And now that I'm elected, he is doing what women have been doing to support their politician husbands forever. His own career is now on the back burner so one of us can parent full-time and one of us can politick full-time. Thanks, Blair. I love you and I really do appreciate you.

My children, Hennessey and Ophelia, deserve an extra big thank you. My girls put up with almost eight months of campaigning from the time the nomination kicked off until the by-election on September 21. Hennessey is in grade 6 at the Saskatoon French School and, at 11, is a very good public speaker. She is filled with passion and compassion, and I know she will go on to do wonderful things in her life. Maybe she'll even sit in this Chamber some day. And I can honestly only hope to aspire to sound half as confident as she already does when she speaks in public.

And Ophelia will be two in December and is such a joy. She's gotten very proficient at chanting Danielle, Danielle or NDP, NDP whenever we're in a crowd, sometimes not so appropriately, but that's okay. There have been many times when it has been so hard for me to be away from her, but her zest for life, her easygoing personality, and her love and enjoyment of her dad have eased my maternal conscience.

My big sister Michelle, when I told her back in February that I wanted to do this, the first thing she said to me is, why in heck's

name would you ever want to do that? Do you not have enough going on in your life? But within about 24 hours after she had processed all the information, she was my biggest supporter and my biggest help. She knocked on doorsteps with me in minus 30 to help me win the nomination, and she knocked on doors in plus 30 to help me win this by-election. Aside from being a great campaigner and a confidante, Michelle is also the best auntie ever. She loves my kids as much as I do and has often been there for them when I can't be.

My sister-in-law Yvette and my brother Marc, who have four children of their own, have also been a huge support for me. With my busy summer of canvassing, Yvette and Marc were always happy to have Hennessey, their fifth child, join along in their family excursions so I could door knock and know my oldest daughter was having fun.

And last but certainly not least, I want to thank my parents Georgiana and Rusty Chartier who are my biggest supporters but will no doubt be my biggest critics and will help ensure . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But it's true. It's true. You laugh but it's true. They will be my biggest critics and will help ensure I stay on the straight and narrow, and will always remind me why I wanted this job in the first place.

I just want to take a quick aside to tell you a bit about my parents. They are good people. They raised seven of us, of whom I'm the youngest, and demonstrated to us through their own actions the importance of being involved in politics and in the broader community.

They've both been very active in the NDP, but they've also been incredibly involved in their community. From their hands-on involvement over the years with organizations like the Saskatoon Farmers' Market, the Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op, Community First Development Fund, Quint, CHEP [child hunger and education program], the Good Food Junction, Station 20 West, and the Heritage Society, just to name a few, they've always been guided by the principle that it is all our jobs to leave this place a bit better than we found it. And even as they approach their 80s in the next few years, neither has really slowed down a bit.

There's some new people in my life I want to thank. The staff at this building, the Legislative Assembly staff — whether it's legal services, security, the staff in the cafeteria, the financial services people to the library services — you've been so helpful in every regard in helping me adjust to this new life.

I also want to thank the members opposite who've had a smile and kind words for me when we've met in the hallway, the cafeteria, the parking lot, or various other places. Thank you. I really do appreciate it.

I want to tell you a bit about my constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale and my relationship to this area. I am a west side girl through and through and very proud to call Saskatoon Riversdale home. My family roots in this community go back to 1942. In fact my husband and I are raising Hennessey and Ophelia on the same street where my grandparents raised my dad and his brothers and sisters, and we live just a few blocks away from where my parents have lived for 53 years. Saskatoon Riversdale is my home. There is no other place I'd want to

represent as an MLA.

Our constituency is made up of the communities of Holiday Park, King George, Pleasant Hill, Riversdale, Meadow Green, Fairhaven, and Montgomery. It's a very diverse constituency. We have some of the poorest people in this province who live there and some of the wealthiest people in the province who live there. We have some of the most beautiful green space in the city. Actually, in fact, just a block from my house we have Holiday Park which is an amazing spot.

We have businesses that have been in the community for decades and, even in ownership and sometimes name changes, continue to thrive and serve our community. We are home to many small businesses like Mel's Café and the first and still thriving Vern's Pizza, and larger businesses and organizations including Cindercrete Products — which the member from Wascana Plains mentioned was her family's business — and Cameco's head office actually is in Saskatoon Riversdale as well.

We are home of the Saskatoon French School, St. John's, King George, St. Mary, St. Dominic, W. P. Bate, St. Mark's, and Montgomery schools. Montgomery School, the latter, was just named to *Today's Parent* magazine's top-20-schools-in-Canada list.

Our constituency is ethnically diverse. In fact, one of our schools is like a mini-United Nations, with students from 29 different countries represented at last count. Saskatoon Riversdale is a constituency not without its challenges, but it is a wonderful place to call home.

So I want to tell you a little bit about myself. I think I'm safe in saying that politics is in my blood. My family's involvement in it stretches actually back to the very beginning of our province. My great-grand-uncle, Albert Champagne, was one of the first MLAs to serve our province back in 1905 as the MLA for Battleford. My uncle Paul worked for John Diefenbaker and enjoyed sharing stories from this time. And in 1988, my own dad ran for mayor in Saskatoon simply for the reason to get the issue of community policing on the public agenda.

My parents have taught me the importance of politics in our lives and the need to give back. Over the last decade or so, when the birth of my first daughter lit my own activist spark, I've known I wanted some role in government or at the very least in impacting government. I wasn't sure if I was going to be behind the scenes as a bureaucrat or as a community activist or out front as a politician. Well, I guess, here I am.

An Hon. Member: — Good choice.

Ms. Chartier: — Yes. During the by-election campaign, the question came up: what do you do? It was hard for me to briefly define myself at this point in my life. My answer was never short or simple. I'm not a teacher or a doctor or a lawyer or something straightforward and simple like that. I was a reporter for 12 years. I was also an at-home mom until my oldest daughter started school and, honestly, I think being a mom is the thing that defines me the most. It is definitely one of the biggest reasons why I decided to put my name forward in this by-election.

Aside from my journalism diploma I do also have a social work degree. But because of the kind of work I've done as a social worker, I never needed to register, so I can't call myself a social worker. I've just about completed a master's in public policy, but not quite. While doing this latest degree I've been doing contract work in the area of work/family balance in lower-waged employees, but haven't focused on this because my youngest daughter isn't even two.

I've also spent the last couple of years of my life working in a volunteer capacity to get the doors open on the Children's Discovery Museum in Saskatoon, which consumed an incredible number of hours for me and for the rest of that board. So no, I don't fit in a nice little, neat little box and can't describe myself in one, two, or even three words, but I like to think my experiences will serve me well in serving my constituents.

Over the last several years I've also spent much of my time in the NDP working on the issue of women and politics. This is because it is my belief that women's issues are not women's issues alone; women's issues are issues of family and of community. I also believe — and there is evidence from other jurisdictions that supports this — that until we begin to elect more women, the priorities of women, of families, and of community will not be the priorities of government. For this reason, our legislature needs to better reflect the diversity of this province.

I had the wonderful library staff in this building put together an extensive bibliography for me, for this speech, on why electing more women matters, and I had tons of reference material to share with you. But as I delved into all this material, you'll be very relieved to know that I realized that this wasn't a paper for one of my classes and my time before you today is limited. But I'm happy to share any of those resources with you if you want to ask.

There are many, many people in my own political party who also believe the diversity of this legislature needs to be enhanced — be it more women, more First Nations and Métis people, or people of visible minorities. I was so pleased to be part of putting forward a resolution at our convention two years ago that saw our party commit unanimously to nominating 50 per cent women candidates in 2011. This next election and fulfilling this commitment is not an end point for our party, but a beginning. It should be the norm, not the exception, that women are well represented in electoral politics on both sides of this Chamber.

I'm totally inspired by the idea of paving the way for more women to get involved in electoral politics, including those like me with young families. I'm fortunate myself to have an incredible family who make this job possible for me, but we do all recognize we will be making big sacrifices. But I want to be a part of ensuring we start to do politics differently and make it easier for individuals with family responsibilities, particularly women, to get involved. It is my belief that although it is a demanding job, it should not be so demanding that our husbands or wives have to give up their lives totally in order for us to be able to serve our community.

A few years ago at an event featuring MP [Member of

Parliament] Libby Davies, a concerned and well-meaning young man vocalized an observation he had made: “Why are female MPs so old? We need to get more young women involved.” This person making this comment did not yet have children himself and clearly did not understand the multiple roles that many women of child-bearing age hold, which I believe keeps women like me out of politics. It’s just too demanding when you have to juggle the roles of politician and primary caregiver, as most women still are of their children.

And I just want to point out what happened last year, when former Green Party leader Amber Jones took her infant to her inaugural news conference and, heaven forbid, happened to nurse her before the official event began. She was absolutely skewered in a blog by John Gormley’s executive producer for supposedly using her daughter as a prop when she was simply being a good mother. I trust that this same producer — or anyone else for that matter — will not be making these kind of disparaging remarks about me when Ophelia comes to visit me for a nursing break and a quick cuddle.

[15:30]

Politics at the best of times is difficult, but it can be even more daunting if you’re a woman. It is my goal to ensure it becomes more desirable for women to enter politics and easier for women to get elected. I envision a world where MLAs spend more time in their home constituencies with their constituents and, as a result, will have the opportunity to go home to their families at the end of a long day. Obviously there are times when MLAs need to be in the legislature, like during session, or need to meet face to face, but technology is such these days that much can be accomplished by meeting at a distance. I am new to this job and I fully acknowledge I don’t have first-hand experience in this regard yet, but I’m not sure there are good reasons why an MLA cannot take part in some meetings while sitting in her local office rather than in Regina.

Just last week I had the pleasure of touring the Saskatchewan Arts Board’s brand new offices on Broad Street and was thrilled to see they’ve equipped their boardroom for meetings at a distance. According to their staff, video conferencing has proved to be very effective and an efficient tool in assisting them to get their work done. If those in the corporate world and those in the not-for-profit world can embrace this new technology, why can’t government?

This is just one possible way of doing politics differently that would be better for MLAs and their families, better for constituents, better for taxpayers, and last but definitely not least, better for the environment. Do this one little thing and I think you might see more women running. At least it would be a start.

So far you’ve heard my many thank yous and I’ve told you a bit about my constituency and a bit about myself. Now I need to talk about what I think of this Throne Speech. I may be new to this legislature but I’ve always understood a Throne Speech is about a vision of the future, not a reflection of the past. I believe my colleagues have already done a fine job of pointing out there is much more in this Throne Speech about the past two years than in the upcoming year. There’s much more a hodgepodge of ideas than a real vision for where this province should go.

So what is in this Throne Speech? We have heard this government is going to limit the number of needles handed out by needle exchange programs, despite the fact its own report says these programs have done a good job at reducing the spread of deadly disease among injection drug users here. Limiting the spread of disease is good on many accounts and the humanity of it should be enough. But one reason that it should appeal to those who don’t have much sympathy for the users who contract diseases and die, it costs taxpayers a great deal of money to treat those with blood-borne disease, even if they die prematurely.

As a mom of two kids who spend time playing in parks where needles have been discovered, I do know where this fear of needle sticks comes from. This is my reality. While on the doorstep during this by-election, several people talked to me also about poorly discarded needles, so I do realize it is a real concern. But as someone who studies public policy, I believe in putting evidence before ideology. I would like to see the evidence on how limiting the number of needles given away will increase an addict’s contact with the health care system and potentially life-changing counselling.

I have heard on many occasions this government talk about the need to address addictions. I would agree wholeheartedly, but I would also argue one needs to take just a step back and deal with the reasons why people become addicted in the first place. The 16-year-old girl who injects cocaine all day long does not do so because her life is good. Chances are good the addiction comes out of the desperation of her life. Poverty, abuse, lack of opportunity, and often racism are just a few of the factors that have likely led to her addiction.

In the Throne Speech we have heard about what this government has done to attract nurses to this province and its success thus far. We also heard about the government’s new strategy to increase the number of physicians working in the province, which is a laudable goal. However this Throne Speech did not even mention, let alone address, the concerns of the thousands of individuals who are the front lines of our health care system in the battle against drug-resistant bugs and illnesses like H1N1, or caring on a daily basis for our loved ones in hospitals, care homes, and through home care services.

The fact that many facilities are often working short of these essential employees, and that we need to attract and retain health care professionals beyond doctors and nurses, did not even warrant a mention in the Throne Speech. I heard from many of these employees while on the doorstep during the by-election, and they do not feel like their contribution to the health care system is valued by this government. The lack of a contract or a decent wage offer, among other issues, reaffirms for them that this government believes our health care system only includes doctors and nurses.

What is glaringly absent in this Speech is this government’s commitment to addressing the issue of affordability for its citizens, which was a very real issue expressed to me when I was on the doorstep during the by-election. When the opposition talks about this issue, the government responds by telling us they removed the lowest income earners from the tax rolls and have increased the social assistance, shelter allowances, and rental supplements. I applaud the government

for doing this. This was a good start and is somewhat expected, especially when you have a giant wallet full of money. But I can tell you people are still suffering, and it's not enough.

The member from Humboldt talks about a balanced approach which is great, but if things aren't balanced, a balanced approach isn't going to work. The people in my constituency, and I know elsewhere in this province, are having a harder and harder time making ends meet. Whether it's the rising utility costs, skyrocketing rents, or the rising cost of food, life is tough. This isn't just an issue for those on social assistance but for those who are working very hard for every dwindling dollar they earn. It's harder for students and it's harder for seniors too. This Throne Speech did nothing to address any of these real and pressing concerns.

I would be remiss as the representative for Saskatoon Riversdale if I did not comment on this government's decision to pull the already-committed funding for the Station 20 West project, a project that grew out of community, not out of government, and would do a great deal for addressing the cost-of-living issues and food securities concerns for many people in Saskatoon. Handing out hamburgers and pop to hungry individuals during the advance polls of a by-election does not constitute a strategy to address hunger in this province. Contrary to the opinion on the benches opposite, Station 20 West was not a political project and still is very worthy of support.

Just to play the devil's advocate here and use the same approach the members opposite often take when they say the NDP has no authority in speaking to issues of rural Saskatchewan, perhaps if you don't live in the core of our urban centres, you have no idea what support individuals need to become full and active citizens in our province.

Because of this government's lack of vision, I will be supporting the amendment and cannot in good conscience support this Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to enter into this exciting debate that looks back at the many significant accomplishments we have made together as a government and as a team. Even more importantly, this conversation provides us with a real opportunity to focus on what we can do to ensure a prosperous future of our home, our Saskatchewan. On that note, I am honoured to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the two members who recently won in the by-election in Saskatoon Riversdale and Regina Douglas Park.

Before I give my response, I would like to first thank my family. Even though I appreciate them every day, it is important to thank them out loud. I have served diligently as an MLA for 10 years now. In order to do the best job I can for my constituency, it requires a lot of extra hours, dedication, and patience. My wife, Cindy, and our three children — Lacey, Marshall, and Alex — have shown me unwavering understanding and patience. They are my rocks keeping me

grounded even in the most intense prairie winds.

I would also like to thank my constituency assistant, Ed Young. It has been 10 years now that Ed and his wife Terry and their two girls, who have treated me like a part of the family, they've always lent out a helping hand as I often need extra support to completely fulfill and carry out my duties as MLA.

My thanks would not be complete without acknowledging the constituents of Biggar constituency. My heart will always be deeply rooted in the prairie community. I've had the pleasure of not only serving its members but also growing with them and among them. I have every faith in my constituents that I am happy to know they will still have faith in me, faith that I will bring their most important issues to this House. I've put my focus on learning what is important to the citizens of Biggar constituency. I promise that, as long as I continue to represent these passionate citizens, I will do whatever I can to make sure your voices are heard, your stories are felt, and your needs are met.

After hearing this year's Throne Speech, I can confidently say that our government is carefully looking after every last piece of the constituency puzzle that joins together and forms a complete Saskatchewan. This province now has over 16,000 new people in Saskatchewan contributing to our growing success. Just as so many of our newcomers can't seem to get here fast enough, our population grew faster than any time since the early 1950s.

We are indeed moving forward and expanding forward. Saskatchewan today is indeed very different from the Saskatchewan the members opposite left us after the 2007 election. It was a time when many people were continually leaving Saskatchewan in the dust as they rode on to oil rich Alberta and other lands of opportunity.

Well today Saskatchewan is rich in population growth, rich in consolidations on Saskatchewan's energy future, rich in education infrastructure. There really are riches to be found in each constituency. People across the country are watching our province shine in the nation's spotlight. They want to get in on the action. In fact many Saskatchewan residents who left the province are eagerly returning in full stride, for Saskatchewan is the new Alberta. RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] Economics highlighted this turning point in March 2008.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our party has never left. We have continued to stand beside the people of Saskatchewan as we tried to make life better for each and every one of them, and it should be evident from our Throne Speech that we have succeeded.

Referring back to the RBC's claim, "Saskatchewan is the new Alberta — holding the top spot nationwide on growth across all key housing indicators . . ." said Derek Holt, assistant chief economist at RBC. Housing would not be the only issue that would take Saskatchewan to the front line in national standings. In March 2008, Enterprise Saskatchewan announced that the province is number one in the country in three important economic categories — wholesale trade, retail sales, and new vehicle sales.

Just last week *The Globe and Mail's* Life section featured an article by André Picard titled, "Here's a radical health care idea:

Put the patient first.” He refers to the report’s idea of making the patients the centre of attention just one of the refreshing . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — He refers to report’s idea of making the patient the centre of attention as:

. . . just one of the refreshingly frank comments found in For Patients’ Sake, a new report out of Saskatchewan, one that should be mandatory reading for every politician, health administrator and health professional . . .

A new state-of-the-system report out of Saskatchewan should be mandatory reading for politicians and health officials alike.

Well we incorporated that report into our Throne Speech so that the entire province could see what we have been up to regarding health care. Our government has responded to the unacceptable backlogs and surgical wait times that were left untreated by the former NDP government.

After reviewing the thorough work done by Mr. Tony Dagnone, we decided to set a bold new goal. Over the next four years, we will reduce surgical waiting lists in the province to no longer than three months. Our government has taken many steps towards improving health care system. We have strengthened cancer care. We added more training seats for doctors and nurses, and we’ve also added 13 new long-term care homes for seniors. Our latest in this long line of health care improvements is, as I have already brought to your attention, the patient-first review. The patient-first review included young and old . . . [inaudible] . . . rich and poor, with special emphasis on including First Nations and Métis voices. Over 4,000 Saskatchewan residents share their experiences, ideas, and opinions.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to make a few comments on agriculture. Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers produce nearly half of Canada’s . . . is one of the world’s largest exporters of canola, three quarters of its flax, mustard, and peas, more than 80 per cent of its durum and lentils, and has the second largest beef herd, bison and elk herds in the country. Saskatchewan has made a name for itself as a reliable supplier of quality agriculture products, and we can thank our producers for that. We have been moving forward on such initiatives as from that review our government made the largest ever contribution to crop insurance program by any Saskatchewan government. Our government’s \$20 million increased the crop insurance program, brought the program’s budget to \$155 million. The result of this investment is better coverage for producers, and it lowers their premiums.

Our government, along with the co-operation of the federal government, has been able to provide \$1 million in new provincial funding for the new Growing Forward agreement with the federal government, investing \$152 million over five years to include the province’s water infrastructure. This program, Mr. Speaker, achieved three strategic outcomes for agriculture in Saskatchewan — a competitive and innovative

sector, a sector that contributes to society’s priorities, and a sector that is proactive in managing risk.

Our government, Mr. Speaker, invested \$71 million to the Saskatchewan cattle and hog support program. Under this program, ranchers receive \$40 per head of beef cows, \$20 per market hog, and \$10 per weanling or feeder hog. This program will help ensure that our agriculture economy will continue to create opportunities in rural Saskatchewan. And I’d like to thank our government and especially our Agriculture minister for fighting hard for Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers at the federal-provincial meetings where he tries to improve AgriStability and agriculture programs for the best interests of Saskatchewan producers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few comments on municipal affairs. Since forming government, our government has committed \$2.5 billion into the province’s infrastructure for such things as highways, schools, health care facilities, and municipal projects. We have moved forward with creating the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative which provides municipalities with an interest subsidy for five years to fund infrastructure development. This program will save municipalities \$5.6 million this year, and over the course of the program municipalities can save up to \$67.5 million.

Communities across Saskatchewan are taking advantage of the programs as we have approved over 70 projects with a total borrowing of \$155.8 million. This is in stark contrast from the past 16 years where previous governments shortchanged municipalities by millions of dollars in operational funding.

Mr. Speaker, our government is moving forward to help communities to grow during this current global recession, Mr. Speaker, and it starts with our new \$100 million municipal economic enhancement program, MEEP, which is unconditional infrastructure funding — no political strings attached. To make the most impact on the communities, we need to accelerate the process, and we did just that.

[15:45]

Mr. Speaker, I’d just like to point out some of the investments in infrastructure in the Biggar constituency besides the MEEP program, which every municipality in the constituency received a per capita funding . But under the Building Canada fund, Langham has received \$1.15 million for a sewer lift upgrade and expansion. Vanscoy received \$1.472 million for a sewage lagoon relocation. Perdue received \$380,000 for a lift station. Radisson received \$558,000 for a reservoir expansion. Borden received \$1.64 million for a water supply treatment. And, Mr. Speaker, and Wilkie received \$4.4 million for a main replacement. The town of Biggar received \$159,000 for a sewage treatment plant, and Asquith received \$1.965 million for a water treatment plant improvement. Asquith also received another \$660,000 for a water main sewer trunk line. Delisle received \$762,000 for a replacement of a lift station, and the town of Biggar also received another \$100,000 for a sanitary sewer main.

Mr. Speaker, we promised to pay down the province’s debt by 250 million within our first year in office and dedicated half of all budget surpluses to debt reduction. Now we’re moving

forward. We've created *The Growth and Financial Security Act*. This will make sure that half of all budget surpluses go towards debt reduction in the future. We greatly exceeded our plan to pay down the province's debt by 250 million within our first year in office.

In our first full year in office, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we reduced the debt by \$5,000 a minute or \$300,000 an hour or \$7 million a day. In other words, we reduced the province's debt by 40 per cent. That's the largest single amount of debt reduction in Saskatchewan history. This means that we can now devote a greater portion of people's tax dollars towards the programs and services that they want and deserve, and less towards paying interest charges left to us by previous governments.

The NDP government has always had a spend-now, worry-about-it-later approach to government, so we've had to tighten our belts. We implemented vacancy management, delayed some investments, and exercised fiscal prudence. In August our government announced that we were looking for a further 50 million in cost saving measures. The ministries pulled together and identified even further savings and efficiencies across the government. We doubled our original target, and we did so without having a significant impact on programs for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the NDP and their new leader are looking backward, Saskatchewan is growing and we're looking forward. Rather than paint a picture of gloom and doom, our government is making sure that the province's growth benefits everyone. This means keeping Saskatchewan affordable. That's why we created the task force on housing affordability to make sure that housing affordability keeps pace with our growing economy.

Since the task force tabled its report, we've acted on 22 of its 36 recommendations. For example, the task force showed that recipients of income assistance were one of the groups hit hardest by the crisis in housing affordability. Our government responded by providing over \$12 million to adjust shelter rates in the income assistance program and to index shelter allowances to 40 per cent of average market rents. This enhancement immediately benefited over 6,000 households across the province.

We've brought in the largest income tax reduction in Saskatchewan history. As part of this, we increased the basic personal exemption by \$4,000. What this means is 80,000 low-income people who paid provincial income tax last year will not have to pay any this year. We've also introduced a number of new tax credits. Combined, these measures will save a family of four over \$1,300 each year. That's \$1,300 into the pockets of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as Teresa from Perdue said to me one day after our budget came down, she thanked me and our government and our Premier for reducing taxes. She says it was very important to her and her family that she did not have to pay any more taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to hear about the history of the opposition leader. He said in his Throne Speech that his family had Liberal roots. Now as we know, he was elected as an

NDP MLA in 1978. And he was a part of the socialist Blakeney government who nationalized the potash industry, driving out business large and small and killing the entrepreneurial spirit of Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the going got tough, of course the Leader of the Opposition abandoned the NDP in 2001. Then what happens? He shows up as an oil company executive in Alberta. It's interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition offered our Premier advice on how to defeat the then NDP Calvert government in the 2003 election. Then we hear the Leader of the Opposition actively campaign for Jim Dinning in the Alberta PC [Progressive Conservative] leadership contest.

Then the Leader of the Opposition comes to Saskatchewan, takes a pro-nuclear position, and speaks in Saskatchewan about the need of a nuclear reactor to be built here. Now he comes back to Saskatchewan to lead the NDP and changes his pro-nuclear stance and now is anti-nuclear. Now we hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he advocates for a government-owned oil company.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly think that the people of Saskatchewan will see through the Leader of the Opposition. And I put my trust into people like Teresa at Perdue and the thousands of families who have benefited from the Saskatchewan Party programs and reduction in taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I will certainly be voting in favour of the Throne Speech and against the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's certainly my honour to rise in debate of the Throne Speech here today. And certainly I'm in favour of the motion. And what you won't get from me, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of back-patting and cheering and then spinning that you're getting from this side. My member just down the side here says pompoms.

What we're going to do and what the opposition's committed to doing is to raising the realities that are facing Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan business, and we're going to be bringing forward constructive solutions and critique on that government because they're failing on so many fronts.

But I'd like to take a quick moment, a brief moment, to welcome a couple new members to the legislature. It's my pleasure to welcome the member from Regina Douglas Park, our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, to this Assembly.

What I know, Mr. Speaker, is this: this leader brings with him experience and leadership in agriculture, in business, and certainly in government as deputy premier and in other ministerial capacities to this Assembly. And the Saskatchewan people are incredibly well served to have an individual bringing that kind of experience, bringing his energy, and bringing that focus to this Assembly here. So we're in good stead there.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to comment that the member from Riversdale, that I welcome her to this Assembly. And I know, in listening to her maiden speech and certainly before that in

knowing that member for some time, that those constituents, her constituents, will be served incredibly well. And the sincerity and commitment that the member from Riversdale brings to the issues of her constituents, which is a very diverse constituency, is going to be very strong moving forward. They have strong representation.

It was a pleasure to see her family in the Assembly here today, who have done so much good within that community for so many years. I know she has a heck of a team around here and that she'll serve that constituency very well.

I'd like to mention and recognize Harry Van Mulligen who has provided exceptional constituency service for many years as city councillor and as MLA. And Harry, I know, is proud of many things and should be proud of many things. He developed many different programs and brought forward new regulatory processes and also new regime structures around tax competitiveness.

But I know Harry, the one thing he's maybe most proud of when he talks about his time in government, is KidsFirst program, Mr. Speaker, that brings needed supports to at-risk parents. And I think that for somebody who presided over an economic boom, for somebody who worked on tax competitiveness and brought forward all those changes, I think it's telling, Mr. Speaker, that his heart was there with the KidsFirst changes. Personally I truly value Harry's friendship and also his wise counsel and judgment from a professional perspective.

I want to thank the good folks within Regina Rosemont who have provided me the opportunity to represent them and speak on their behalf in this Assembly. And within our constituency, there's so many events and activities that make the area rich with opportunity and for families and for young people. It's a pleasure to serve and to be a part of that kind of activities from a sporting perspective, from a cultural perspective, from arts perspectives. We see it through our schools. We see it through our community associations, Mr. Speaker, and it's my pleasure to serve them.

I'd like to mention specifically the McNab Community Association, Mr. Speaker, who has refurbished and revitalized their park space with a significant tree planting program. The park looks fantastic. I'd like to thank the city of Regina on this front and as well Dundee Developments for their partnership.

Other community associations throughout the constituency do similarly important work. And I know the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association are so regularly putting forward a rich array of exceptional youth and family programs that make our community better, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the numerous outdoor hockey league coaches that have come forward in the last year, and we look forward to offering that program to our constituents again here this year, Mr. Speaker.

I would be remiss not to recognize our constituency assistant, Donna From, who works tirelessly on a myriad of issues and problems brought forward by constituents. And it's with great devotion and dedication and organization that Donna From

works to find solutions for my constituents, for our constituents.

And what we realize is we have a busy office, and we have many issues coming into our office. But what we realize and recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that when a constituent arrives at our door, it's not typically the first place that they've come to. Usually it's of last resort. And in most cases, Mr. Speaker, there's urgency and a constituent's at their wits' end. And in some cases, it's urgent crisis, Mr. Speaker. So it's my belief that constituents' needs are the first priority of an MLA and of the constituency assistant. And I know Donna From prioritizes these on a daily basis. I appreciate her response to our constituents' needs.

And it's particularly satisfying to find practical and quick solutions to needs of constituents, but it's frustrating and disappointing when solutions are not at hand, particularly when the many of the issues that my constituents face are of huge strain upon them as individuals and as families. It's common to receive calls with respect to health care, individuals languishing on wait-lists. And they thought at one point that this Premier and this government, the Sask Party, was going to improve some of these fronts. What we've seen is the opposite. We've seen those wait-lists get longer. Other challenges such as cost of living or adequate housing, cost of utilities, prescription drugs are a real strain for many of my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

And on the other side of that, we have something that's really gone on significantly in 2009, and that's job loss, Mr. Speaker, layoff. And this brings about a certain kind of desperation and strain on families that is undue and that a government must respond to.

And it's difficult to see so many jobs being shed in this province under the Sask Party. It's difficult to witness strong, caring parents all of a sudden facing the harsh reality that they simply might not be able to make ends meet, put food on the table, or pay the bills. So many of these families have never experienced this sort of state of helplessness before. They're middle class. They're hard-working. They're educated. They're able. They're trained. And they've been very proud of being able to take care of themselves.

But for far too many, Mr. Speaker, 2009 hasn't provided this kind of opportunity. For far too many, in 2009, the Sask Party has failed on an economic front, and it's directly affecting the lives, happiness, and fulfilment of many of my constituents.

As our Premier stood in Taylor Field in an empty stadium to cheerlead and back pat himself on population numbers, I had two different families — two different constituents, two different cases — within my office that were looking for something that I couldn't provide, and were desperate, Mr. Speaker. They were looking for a return to work, a return to the quality of life that they so expect the same very day that we have a Premier cheerleading in an empty stadium.

It's these sincere and hard realities, Mr. Speaker, that many families are facing in 2009, a year that has seen a huge drop in full-time jobs year over year. And people are concerned that the Sask Party doesn't know what it's doing from an economic perspective.

[16:00]

Unfortunately not only has the Sask Party developed a miserable record with respect to our economy — a decline in so many sectors and a major job loss problem — but the Sask Party are too busy and too focused on spin and denying the truths.

And the minister . . . minister, that's a joke. The member from Moose Jaw North shouts out, what am I saying? And so that the member from Moose Jaw North knows, because many of his constituents are facing the same things, he needs to realize that right now — in this year, year over year — we've lost jobs in a huge way. And while our population has grown, we actually have less people working in this province. That's an unemployment problem, Mr. Speaker, and it affects constituents in Moose Jaw North. And that member should be ashamed of himself in the . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. The member, Regina Rosemont, has the floor.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — If the member from Moose Jaw North doesn't recognize that many of his constituents have lost jobs and found 2009 as a difficult year, I would urge them to write that member. But I would also maybe ask that member simply to be in a little bit more touch with what's going on in reality instead of putting the pompoms up from the Sask Party benches over there and pretending that everything is good.

It's unhelpful that the Sask Party prefers to focus all its energy to try to sell positive stories instead of coming to terms with the realities of the people they have sworn to serve because for far too many, Mr. Speaker, 2009 has been a difficult year. It hasn't been an easy year. It's been difficult for those thousands that have been laid off or lost their jobs across this province. Just two Fridays ago, as the Sask Party continued to employ its economic plan of crossing its fingers and its toes and thinking good thoughts while spinning statistics and cheerleading, 1,100 families, Mr. Speaker, were facing the harsh reality of recession — job loss — as they received layoff notices just prior to the Thanksgiving weekend, Mr. Speaker.

Sask Party spin is cold comfort to these workers and the thousands of others that have lost their jobs or have been laid off. Sask Party denial of an economic recession and lack of an economic plan is worrisome and problematic, Mr. Speaker, to the people of this province.

Our Labour minister, Mr. Speaker, in hearing about the 1,100 layoffs, Mr. Speaker, says and I quote, "For now, great empathy goes out to those affected." Well with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the workers aren't looking for the minister's great empathy. They're looking for their jobs back. And I'll remind the out-of-touch minister, part-time Minister of Labour that they deserve more than Sask Party's spin and bluster. They deserve economic solutions being put forward.

We have great concern and have raised this throughout the year — it's sort of a thread that's worked its way through — is great concern from a perspective of financial management. Financial

mismanagement in the case of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. And I have a few general comments with this perspective.

Right now at this point in time we had a \$1.3 billion miss on revenues, and this is growing larger by the day. The Sask Party has been anything but transparent in sharing this information and addressing and planning for this information.

What we realize in this Assembly is that we have something that's historic because we know this government here, the Sask Party, likes to talk about making history. Well, Mr. Speaker, they made history all right. Never in the province of Saskatchewan has one government missed one resource in a calendar year by more than \$1.3 billion. They made history, made history, Mr. Speaker, in a very negative way — ill planned.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we have as a result of this is we have a government that's had strong revenues, had a windfall of dollars available in a rainy day fund and surpluses, but they overspent it, Mr. Speaker. And what we see is, we see a creation of a structural deficit, Mr. Speaker. That's right, Mr. Speaker. It's not just a summary deficit, Mr. Speaker, but a structural deficit as we move forward.

And when we talk about a structural deficit, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a government that's overspending its resources at a time where, in many ways, they shouldn't — where the revenues are strong and they have no excuse but for their own mismanagement. We have a burn rate on resources of government such as a rainy day fund that has been drained from well over \$2 billion to well under, to 800 million here today. And we have stripping of Crown equity like never before at a time of relative revenue strength, Mr. Speaker — no excuses for this.

And we have massive job loss, Mr. Speaker. And we talked about what this means for the constituents in Riversdale or in Rosemont or for your constituents, Mr. Speaker, or for certainly the Premier's. And we know this one thing about the economic challenges that have been created by the Sask Party, is that they're indiscriminate of what constituency we represent, Mr. Speaker.

And people around the province are applying certain terminology or words to the financial mismanagement, the fiscal mismanagement of this government. We hear that it's in disarray. We hear that they're reckless. We hear that the Sask Party's irresponsible, and we hear that the Sask Party's incompetent from a fiscal and financial perspective, Mr. Speaker. Well I think the people of Saskatchewan are bang on in all these fronts, Mr. Speaker.

And we've toured the province and met with constituents around the province and I know that the word on the street, on coffee row, from community to community, is that this party here, the Saskatchewan Party, is anything but fiscally conservative and anything but fiscally responsible. We hear this in Moosomin. We hear this in Carlyle. We hear it in Oxbow. We hear it in Weyburn. We hear it in Estevan. We hear it in Fort Qu'Appelle. We hear it across this province. We hear it in Saskatoon.

We hear it in Estevan an awful lot. If you go down there and you chat, what people expect is, they say, well we have oil and gas industry that's moving along very well and we have no excuse, no excuse to be in the kind of financial disarray that this government's put us in, Mr. Speaker. The people down in Estevan are astounded when they hear that the Bakken play has been such a strong revenue source for the province and that the treasury, the financial purse of this government, has been mismanaged by the Sask Party. And they're asking, where's their voice, Mr. Speaker? Where's their voice in making sure that the fiscal order is re-established?

An Hon. Member: — You don't know what you're talking about.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the member from Moose Jaw North just says he doesn't know what he's talking about. We agree. He doesn't know what he's talking about, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party is so busy spinning and denying the facts around recession, yet they won't address the issues around economic growth or putting things back in order so that people have jobs and the kind of expectations around quality of life that they so expect.

The Sask Party — and don't get me wrong — the Sask Party fiscal mismanagement compromises the future opportunity of this province, the prosperity, and dashes hopes across this province, Mr. Speaker. To have a government presiding over a time where Saskatchewan should be truly moving forward and seeing the opposite happening, seeing us return to deficit financing, is disgraceful, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately the Sask Party has zero credibility as it relates to fiscal management. It's in fact an embarrassing return to conservative mismanagement that we recall in this province all too well from the 1980s, and the effect of that, Mr. Speaker, the cost of interest on that debt.

There is little that Saskatchewan people despise more than a government that mismanages its finances — little they despise more. It goes against the grain of Saskatchewan people that believe in responsible management of their finances. Saskatchewan people deserve and expect a government that takes care of the present and plans for the future. Financial mismanagement gets in the way of all of that. It's the kind of mismanagement that's inexcusable and puts at risk the kind of prosperity and opportunity that Saskatchewan people and business should readily deserve and expect, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan's economy has provided strong revenues, a position of strength for the treasury for this Sask Party government. And with this in mind, it has no excuse, no excuse but for its own mismanagement, and why we're in the financial wreck that we're in here today.

No government has ever been left with such a strong position. Billion dollar surpluses, a red-hot economy firing on all cylinders, Mr. Speaker, from the New Democrats, built in partnership with the businesses and the people of Saskatchewan and along with New Democrat government, Mr. Speaker.

On March 18th, 2009, the Sask Party put forward a budget. I

believe they called it *Strong and Steady*. It was anything but; it was the exact opposite. We challenged the government on their projections for the price of potash and each and every time they told us we were off base, Mr. Speaker. We offered our advice; it fell on deaf ears. We offered our advice; they chose not to listen.

In fact on March 19th, 2009, the member from Kindersley ridiculed our member when he asked to clarify these projections. And what did he say? He said, I quote, “. . . he was too incompetent to understand that. And as a former Finance minister, that's absolutely reprehensible.”

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that coming from the Minister of Energy and Resources is the embarrassment, Mr. Speaker. And those very words, Mr. Speaker, the very words here, incompetent and absolutely reprehensible, are the words that we here need to be applying today to the Minister of Energy and Resources, to the Finance minister, and to the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because that's what we're hearing and that's what we're seeing.

And I think it's important that we recognize that our Premier, he really likes to be on TV shows like CNN [Cable News Network] or channels like CNN or BNN [Business News Network]. And it's likely, Mr. Speaker, that he's turned down all sorts of invites to appear and speak to mismanagement of historic proportions from a financial perspective. The biggest miss on one resource, 1.3 billion and growing. This is not the centre stage, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan people wish to occupy and we ask the Premier and the Sask Party to quit embarrassing our province with their lack of business acumen and financial credibility.

Our potash producers are incredibly important to our province and to our province's prosperity. And these companies certainly were not caught off near as much as this government was, Mr. Speaker. And why is that? Well it's because these companies did their job, Mr. Speaker. These companies did their job. And I hear some heckling from the other side and I guess they still don't understand what was going on when the potash producers were scaling down production in historic ways in late 2008 and into 2009.

Unlike the Sask Party, they paid attention to all the signs and in late 2008 and early 2009 they were drawing down production in historic ways. They paid attention when the University of Illinois who said, I quote, “Fertilizer prices . . . to decline in early 2009,” unlike this Premier and the Sask Party who denied the facts. And they paid attention, Mr. Speaker, when the Belarusian Potash Company, an exporter of potash fertilizers, cut the price of potash for Brazilian customers for the first time since 2006, on March 6, 2009 — before budget, pre-budget, with time for this government to respond yet they forge ahead blindly.

Now when Brazil is allowed to pay a price, it's not rocket science that other nations of the world are going to also be fighting for lower prices, thus driving down prices. It was a straightforward fact for this government to recognize, reflecting the demand worldwide; demand that was greatly reduced by recessions and decisions by the largest buyers in the world — China, India, and Brazil. It was only commonplace and evident

that there would be a reduction in potash buying worldwide, a reduction in demand. And of course potash producers responded by massively reducing production, addressing supply, Mr. Speaker.

But none of these facts, Mr. Speaker, none of these facts — global recession, signals from the biggest buyers in the world, analysts' suggestions of a reduction, or the many signals in our own backyard with the huge scaling down in production — that none of these signs, none of these signals were picked up by the Sask Party, who forged ahead.

The facts were in front of them. They were in our own backyard. They were on the pages of the financial papers, Mr. Speaker, yet they ignored these or, Mr. Speaker, they disregarded them purposefully. I'm not sure. So we have an industry who knew, the banks who knew, and I tend to believe that a civil service that knew. But this government remained in the dark. And I don't buy that. This government denied all information available to them and proceeded with a blind, gut feeling.

There's only two explanations for the revenue mismanagement: either they put forward numbers that they knew were not true — think about that — they put forward numbers that they knew were not true, or they truly, truly had no sniff, not a clue, about what was going on in their own economy, Mr. Speaker. Those are the only two possible explanations. One is not more desirable than the other, Mr. Speaker. Either they tried to pull a fast one on Saskatchewan people, or they're incompetent. There's no other possible explanation — either one is damning and certainly both of them are inexcusable.

And this government has denied the facts of mismanagement all the way along. It has been anything but transparent. In fact those members opposite were unable to release their first quarter information in a timely manner. Why was that? Was it that the Premier was too busy strutting his stuff for a meeting of our nation's premiers, or did he just want to pretend for a little while longer that things were all okay?

For our Premier, who I understand is giddy about a federal run with the Conservatives, it was likely decided that announcing their miss, their shortfall that he had created on the biggest overstatement on one resource revenue source in our province's history, was likely not in his best personal interest just before he fluffed his feathers on the national stage with his fellow premiers. He wanted to pretend for just a while longer, Mr. Speaker. He wanted to hide that his house of cards had fallen, Mr. Speaker. So he delays the release.

[16:15]

But what might be good for his own federal career option was clearly not in the best interest of Saskatchewan people. The fact the Premier stalled a timely and important accountability exercise for his own personal gain says a lot, Mr. Speaker. It could be said that timely and transparent reporting of government activities is even more important when mismanagement has occurred, when a government has made the kinds of errors that the Sask Party has made — mismanagement that costs Saskatchewan people's . . . compromises important opportunities. The Sask Party government has not provided

strong fiscal management. It's provided anything but, and it's been anything but transparent, Mr. Speaker.

And we all pay for that, whether you're constituents in Indian Head-Milestone, whether you're constituents in Yorkton or Melfort or Estevan or Rosemont or Riversdale — all constituents pay for that. Whether you're up in Saskatoon and you're cutting a children's hospital as a result of a disorganized and disarray of financial management, it affects all constituents. Whether you're the Education minister and you're cutting \$30 million of children's infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and delaying addressing plans, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that this government can throw up trial balloon after trial balloon that are popular and then shoot them out of the sky, Mr. Speaker, with what they think are no consequences. But there are consequences, Mr. Speaker. There are consequences, Mr. Speaker, and I believe in 2011 these members opposite are going to recognize those consequences.

And they'd like to hide this kind of stuff from the people of Saskatchewan. And this is just endemic of their behaviour, never telling the people of Saskatchewan the whole story — never telling the whole story. Last week the Speech from the Throne mentioned RBC's provincial outlook for September 2009, but as per usual, they did not tell the whole story, Mr. Speaker. They neglected to tell the people of the province the headline in the report that states, "Saskatchewan — No longer escaping a contraction."

They forgot to tell the people of Saskatchewan that they cherry-picked a couple positive statements about next year, but they forgot to tell the people that the economy's shrinking here in Saskatchewan, right now at this point in time — a decline in our economy, a decline. But I suppose you can't have your pompoms in the air, cheerleading and spinning, and talking about an economic decline that's going on under this government.

And the Minister for Enterprise is over here yukking it up and laughing. And I know he's just made it back from Kazakhstan and what I have to say, Mr. Speaker, is that when we're talking about economic recession, we're talking about statistics, about wholesale trade or manufacturing trade or exports, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's that minister right there that needs to be in tune — maybe not travelling the world, Mr. Speaker, but right here, Mr. Speaker, and tending to the economy and putting forward a plan, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's important for that member to know.

And I think it's important as well that the member who's looking here, Mr. Speaker, and he seems to now be engaged in debate, and I'd urge him to understand this one as well, that housing starts, Mr. Speaker, have plummeted. They're down 56 per cent in this province at this point in time, lower, Mr. Speaker. And you have to go back a long ways to see the kind of numbers — all the way back to 2002, Mr. Speaker. Now there was a lot of gains, Mr. Speaker, from 2002 to 2007 and 2008, and to see the kind of depressive economic statistics that the Sask Party's presiding over is rather embarrassing, Mr. Speaker.

And we challenge the government to put forward a plan that

isn't simply built on crossing their fingers and their toes and thinking good thoughts.

So it gets down to a question of trust, lack thereof; a question of competence, or in better words, incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Last year we had the Minister of Finance who was talking about his cautious estimates, Mr. Speaker. Caution, Mr. Speaker, as he talked about his budget. In fact the same Finance minister after tabling his error-filled budget drove down to Moose Jaw to speak with the chamber of commerce, Mr. Speaker. And from the Moose Jaw *Times-Herald*, from March 25, I quote, "If he is wrong he thinks it's probably a good wrong."

It goes on, Mr. Speaker. I quote:

Gantefoer said if there is an error in the ministry's estimates, it would likely be due to a conservative underestimate regarding the upcoming economic year in Saskatchewan, so residents can rest easy.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Rest easy? Rest easy, folks, he says? And then we have the biggest, most historic miss on one revenue source in this province's history — well over \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker — and he says, just trust us. Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't trust them nor do the people of Saskatchewan. They don't in Weyburn. They don't in Estevan. They don't in Carlyle. They don't in La Ronge. They don't in North Battleford. They certainly don't in Moose Jaw North. I know that for sure.

So I think it's worthwhile to look at some of the other commentary that's going on because we have some good other discussion that's going on, the columnists of our papers. And I quote Bruce Johnstone of the *Leader-Post* on September 5, 2009. I quote,

... I find the provincial economy has gone to hell in a handcart.

Not only that, but the province's fiscal situation has deteriorated dramatically ...

So what happened to our formerly rosy economic outlook?

What happened, Mr. Speaker, is mismanagement. What happened, Mr. Speaker, was broken down processes. What happened, Mr. Speaker, was a denial of the facts and going on a gut feeling. Or, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, forging ahead knowing that you had an unrealistic number because, Mr. Speaker, it seems unique, it seems odd, that the only number that's unique to Saskatchewan — that being potash revenues — is the number that this government misses so terribly. Either they didn't have the competence to get it right or, Mr. Speaker, it's the only that they could fudge in their books, Mr. Speaker.

What are other commentaries saying, Mr. Speaker? Well we can go on. And Murray Mandryk of the *Leader-Post* on August 26 says ... and the article is titled "Gov't made Devine error."

[Inaudible interjection] ... And the member from Moose Jaw North says that Mandryk doesn't say anything worth repeating, Mr. Speaker. And sometimes we don't always agree with Mr. Mandryk, Mr. Speaker. But I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. I'll

tell you this, Mr. Speaker: we believe the freedom of the press and the role of the press, Mr. Speaker. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? On this occasion I truly, truly, truly believe in the words of Mr. Mandryk who says that the government made a Devine error.

He goes on as well to say that "This happens to be the biggest government miscalculation since PC finance minister Gary Lane's 1986 budget," Mr. Speaker.

Epic proportions, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing financial mismanagement in. He goes on and gives the rational discussion as far as why the Sask Party — and he calls it "idiotic spin" — why they seem to purport that no one saw this coming. And he talks about all the different facts that were available to this government, specifically a five-year average that excludes the anomalous year of 2008 that saw potash revenues at \$259 million, Mr. Speaker — \$259 million. This is a five-year trend average, excluding the anomalous year of 2008.

Well what does this government go out and choose as a number, Mr. Speaker? Not twice that 500 million; not three times that; not four times that. They picked \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker. Where are we going? Higher. Where are we going, Mr. Speaker? Less rational. Where are we going? More mismanagement. That's what we're getting with the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

So the facts were in front of this government. That article goes on and explains that if Mr. ...

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — That article, Mr. Speaker, goes on to highlight that basically if this government wants to not be compared to that government of Grant Devine, then they better quit acting just like that same government as it relates to their finances.

I think it gets down that question again that people across this province are asking in constituencies such as Melfort and Canora and Estevan and Swift Current. They're asking a question of trust and competence. ... [inaudible interjection] ... And the Minister of Education who had to cut \$30 million of children's infrastructure shouts across that, no, people in Canora don't care about financial mismanagement. He suggests somehow that people in Canora are okay with financial mismanagement.

And I challenge that minister, I challenge that minister, Mr. Speaker, that they have a huge problem, Mr. Speaker, with a government, a government creating a structural deficit at a time where things are strong within this province, or have been strong within this province, Mr. Speaker. And they're concerned at how a government can so poorly, poorly estimate its revenues.

Never, never, Mr. Speaker, has a government missed one revenue source, such as potash, by over a billion dollars — let

alone a billion three, a billion four, a billion five. Wherever the dust settles, we're not certain on this, Mr. Speaker.

So we witness mismanagement. We witness a lack of transparency and accountability. It becomes a question of a lack of trust that Saskatchewan people are sharing and incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Sask Party policies are failing our economy, Mr. Speaker. And I think that it's important for me to share some of the economic statistics with the members opposite, to make sure they understand what in fact they're leading here, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, order. There's been a couple of conversations going on across the floor. I'll ask the members to carry them on behind the bar. The member from Regina Rosemont has the floor.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time for caution and quiet as well because the Minister of Enterprise should really listen in to a few of these numbers here right now. What we know right now is some economic statistics, is that we have 700 fewer jobs year over year . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the member from Moose Jaw North heckles me when I say that we've lost jobs. Many of those and some of those are his constituents, and for him to disregard it in the blatant disregard that he does is completely irresponsible. And I can be certain that in 2011 those constituents will likely be sending him a message.

And I can point to the loss of 3,700 full-time jobs year over year in this province. Mr. Speaker, 4,700 layoffs in 2009, not counting I guess, the newest 1,100. So we're up to 5,800, Mr. Speaker. We know that unemployment has risen, that EI [employment insurance] recipients have increased by 44 per cent year over year, Mr. Speaker. We know that there's been a 142 per cent increase in employment insurance recipients under the age of 25, Mr. Speaker, a huge problem for youth employment.

We know that there's been a decline of 6,000 youth employed in this province. Plummeting housing starts down by 56 per cent. Consumer spending is down dramatically. Retail sales are down. Wholesale trade is down 35 per cent, Mr. Speaker. International trade — and I ask the Minister of Enterprise to listen — are down 30 per cent. Manufacturing trade, 33 per cent. Livestock receipts down 26 per cent. Crops 29 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We see failing economic statistic after economic statistic, and these are indicative of the policies of that government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

A few other comments that have been made about this government, Mr. Speaker, I reference Neil Scott from the *Leader-Post* on September 5, 2009, titled "Recession begins to hammer Saskatchewan." I quote, "The slowdown has now officially hit Saskatchewan." *Leader-Post* of August 15th, titled "National sales up, Sask. sales down," Mr. Speaker. "Virtually every sector is down," says Doug Elliott of Sask Trends. I quote, "The decline in the first half of the year 'is quite remarkable. . .'" The decline is quite remarkable.

Another article from August 8th, Mr. Speaker, is that "Sask. job

drop 'worrisome,'" Mr. Speaker. And I see a note here from my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, and they're saying I should wrap it up in the next few minutes here, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I will. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, I could stand before you for likely a good hour sharing the negative economic statistics, Mr. Speaker. But what we have to recognize when we're talking about statistics is that the effect to the real families, Mr. Speaker, in this province. The circumstances has gotten a lot more difficult for people in this province under the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

As a couple last wrap-up comments, Mr. Speaker, I guess the comment would be, why would we expect anything different, Mr. Speaker? Because it all starts at the top, Mr. Speaker. It starts at the top. And at the top for the Sask Party government, that Premier is not occupied, Mr. Speaker, by somebody with experience or leadership that this province is well served by, Mr. Speaker. We have an individual who built his experience underneath Grant Devine and Brian Mulroney, Mr. Speaker. And certainly when you do that, Mr. Speaker, you'd expect that you'd see the same kind of practice back here when it relates to financial mismanagement, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the Premier, at one point, received a whole bunch of government money — \$150,000 — to open up a Hall of Fame, Mr. Speaker. He assured government, Mr. Speaker, that he'd have 34,000 visitors a year, Mr. Speaker, and that they'd be highly viable. What we saw, Mr. Speaker, is that they only had 2,500 people a year, Mr. Speaker, 2,500 people a year. And what we see, Mr. Speaker, is a very similar circumstance as it relates to our revenues and our finances, our potash revenues, and miscalculations, Mr. Speaker. So we don't have a leader, we don't have a Premier that is going to be able to provide the kind of economic leadership that we expect and deserve in this province, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

The Throne Speech put forward by that government is focused on the past, Mr. Speaker. This opposition is focused on moving forward, and we're going to continue to raise those issues. The Throne Speech, the Throne Speech failed to address forestry, cattle, and hog producers. It didn't address a labour shortage. It shortchanged small business. It's failing our Crown corporations. It failed the most vulnerable in Saskatchewan. It failed students. It failed seniors. And it failed the First Nations and Métis of this province, Mr. Speaker.

So while that government focuses on looking back and back-patting and cheerleading and spinning, we're going to focus on the realities of Saskatchewan and putting forward constructive policies to ensure that our prosperity is achieved, Mr. Speaker, for all people.

And at this point, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd just simply like to say that with the kind of fiscal mismanagement that we're witnessing under this government, with the kind of economic failure that we see as a result of Sask Party failures, Mr. Speaker, that I can say to you unequivocally, that there's not a chance that I could support the Throne Speech. And I'm very honoured and pleased to support the motion put forward by our honourable leader. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

[Applause]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, with that elation from my colleagues, I should probably stop now, but anyway I'll take it where it's coming from. I think I see the odd member applauding from the opposite way as well, and I certainly hope that they continue to applaud throughout the speech — especially the member from Regina Rosemont who I'll refer to a bit later.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great pleasure to enter into this debate and to rise from my seat in the legislature. And I take this role very seriously because it's an honour and a privilege to serve, and I know each one of us feels that in this House. And we can only do it by thanking those that allow us to perform this function. And I want to begin by thanking my wife Trish and my family, my son Carter, my daughter Paige, and our family who enable me to do this job.

Trish has faced some challenges health-wise, but she's overcome those challenges and now she continues to give back to the community. She's undertaking a role as a speaker and performing some charity work for organizations in Saskatoon and area, allowing her to tell her story.

The kids: Carter's 11 years old in grade 7 at Cardinal Leger; Paige is in grade 4, nine years old. They're both involved in all kinds of sports and all kinds of activities and just loving life here in Saskatchewan.

Other people that allow me to do this job: my great constituency assistant, Beth Epp in Saskatoon, does a tremendous job fielding questions from my constituents and from around Saskatoon from many of the members opposite. And she does a great job doing that. And also the staff in my ministerial office as well, they do a great job in allowing me to do this job.

I want to congratulate the new members in the legislature, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale and the member for Saskatoon . . . Regina Douglas Park. No, Douglas Park isn't part of Saskatoon quite yet, but . . . No, it was great to see the member from Saskatoon Riversdale and her family here in the legislature and undertake her maiden speech. And she did a very good job, and we look forward to having her make her contribution in this Legislative Assembly.

It's great to see the member from Regina Douglas Park back. And, you know, as in true fashion, he took that 2,500 vote plurality that was there by the former member and reduced it down to 500. So, you know, we can see with a trajectory like that — and I know that members opposite, they like numbers and they like statistics — so we ran the statistics. We ran the numbers.

Taking a plurality of 2,500 in Douglas Park down to 500, if they did that across, it would be that old thing, you know, for the NDP. Look to your left; look to your right. They're not going to be there anymore because you'd only have five or six seats left if those votes translated across the province. And I suggest, I suggest . . . The member for Saskatoon Riversdale is

smiling. Well she knows that she might still be here. But there might be 15 or 16 others on the other side that the seats will be over here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise and to talk about the Speech from the Throne. It's a great title — isn't it? — “Moving Forward” in Saskatchewan. Moving forward is the focus of the Speech from the Throne. It continues the commitment that this government has to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that we're not immune from what's happening in world markets. We know that we're affected by it, but we also know that we were the last ones in, and we're going to be the first ones out. And there's many statistics to prove that. I know the member from Regina Rosemont was citing some statistics. I have many, many others that I'd like to discuss in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing Saskatoon Silver Springs, a great constituency, a constituency that's growing and flourishing. I have to thank the honourable member from Saskatoon Greystone, the Minister of Immigration, for the work that he's done because, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't long ago that I was campaigning in 2001 and 2002 and 2003 for that 2003 election and what did we see? When I went down the street in Saskatoon Silver Springs, door after door, house after house, people said come on in. I want to tell you about my family. I want to tell you about my son and daughter that had to move to Calgary or Edmonton or Vancouver. I want to tell you about how much I want them back here in Saskatchewan.

Well I listened to those people. All of us listened to those types of people, and that's why we were able to win seats in Saskatoon. We were able to win seats in Regina in 2007. And now when we go and look at our constituencies, I can walk down the street, and I can talk to people that have come to Saskatchewan from Europe, from Asia. They have come here to make a new life, to start their business, to take their business that they've started elsewhere to bring it to Saskatchewan, to talk about making a new life here in Saskatchewan under a government, under a new vision for our province, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we see such growth happening in areas.

Willowgrove for example, the heart of my constituency, will have some 8,000 people before long. Before long, my constituency, Mr. Speaker, the one that I have the honour of representing, will be twice the size of a regular constituency, twice the size that it was in 2003 because of that phenomenal economic growth and because of immigration policies and a government that isn't afraid to set targets, to set targets and to actually meet those targets. And that's what we're seeing with our government, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents, they're not political in the elementary sense of the word. They just want a common sense government that actually gets things done, and that's what they're getting from the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents are telling me that they're very pleased with what we have accomplished so far. They know, they've read closely that the document that we brought before them in the

last election, the promises that we made . . . Yes, we made over 100 promises in that election, Mr. Speaker and we have kept every one, Mr. Speaker, every promise, every promise.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I know members opposite don't like to hear about it, but they're going to hear about it anyway because debt reduction affects everyone in Saskatchewan. It affects members that voted for them. It affects members that voted for us. We've taken the debt from some \$6.8 billion to \$4.2 billion — a reduction of 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of reductions, reducing the tax rolls in the province by 80,000 people, Mr. Speaker. Personal income tax reductions, that's what people wanted from the Saskatchewan Party government. That's what they're getting today, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are very pleased with the property tax reductions that have taken place, the largest property tax reductions that ever has taken place in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They are very pleased with that.

Members opposite had talked about the children's hospital, and that's something that we were committed to. That's something that members opposite talked about and talked about and talked about. We were the ones that actually made the announcement. We're the ones that are following through with the commitment, Mr. Speaker.

When the children's hospital and their board came to our government and said, let's get the government announcement out there so we can spur on the private sector, so more people can come forward and donate, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what has happened in Saskatoon and across Saskatchewan. And I want to thank people like John and Sonya Remai who have come forward and put their own hard worked dollars into that hospital; Les and Irene Dubé, Mr. Speaker, \$6.5 million towards that contribution; the Harland Sanders Foundation and many, many others who I know will be making that contribution and doing their part to join with the government to join with the Saskatoon Health Region and the Children's Hospital Foundation in ensuring that not only do we have a children's hospital, but we have one of the best children's hospitals in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I've had numerous constituents call me since the Throne Speech to say that they are thrilled with the fact that we're finally going to address surgical wait times in Saskatchewan. They've been waiting for a long time. Those long waiting lists have been there for most of the 16 years that the NDP was in place. Those waiting lists have grown and grown and grown, until they've come to a crisis proportion. So finally somebody had to do something, and that's why our Minister of Health, in articulating it through the Speech from the Throne, has said that there will be a three-month wait within four years, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health should be congratulated for doing the work that I would suggest should have been done, that he wanted done, when the opposition was in government but they wouldn't touch it, Mr. Speaker. They wouldn't touch it at all because their political process of course got in the way of doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken about other great things that this government has done. Twinning of the highway, Highway 11, we haven't talked about that for a while. That's happening, Mr.

Speaker. Many of my constituents are very, very pleased to see that happen. \$15.7 million for the vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan. And of course, the renovation and expansion of the Queen's Bench Court House, now I hope not many of my constituents will have to use that courthouse, but nevertheless it's infrastructure that we need and infrastructure that was long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking to constituents, whether it's at hockey rinks or grocery stores or at the soccer centre, there's one thing that people have told me. They said the Saskatchewan Party government, whether we agree with you or not, at least you've had the fortitude to make decisions, instead of sitting on your hands. Yes, it's something that we have to congratulate our Premier and every one of my colleagues on, that decisions were made. Decisions were made in a responsible manner.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk again about the privilege of the responsibilities that I have in this legislature, and specifically I'm responsible for Enterprise Saskatchewan, the Minister of Trade, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, the Saskatchewan entertainment facility. Mr. Speaker, all of these are areas that I take great responsibility with.

SaskEnergy for example is a Crown corporation that I've had responsibility for since we've become government. It's a Crown corporation that has provided Saskatchewan residents with gas rates that were the lowest in the country for seven of the last ten years, Mr. Speaker. Today it's not only the rate and the commodity that they provide, Mr. Speaker; it's their commitment to serving Saskatchewan residents. Today as we speak, there are 34 construction crews out across Saskatchewan servicing farmers who need gas for drying their grain, servicing new businesses, servicing some 450 communities, Mr. Speaker, with extra gas hook-ups and providing that service, and again doing it at the lowest possible cost, Mr. Speaker.

That's what a Crown corporation should do. That was our commitment to use the Crown corporations to provide that service, and again, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what this Saskatchewan Party government has done. Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what this Saskatchewan Party government has done.

Mr. Speaker, we have connected more people in the last three years — some 15,000 new customers — than the entire decade that the Leader of the Opposition was in Alberta. So three years, 15,000 new connections in 10 years . . . and I want to present this fact because it's a fact that the Leader of the Opposition should know because in 10 years, in living in another province and paying higher rates for most of that time than SaskEnergy was charging, that's a fact that he should know, and I'm happy to provide it for him, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing is SaskEnergy offers stable rates for Saskatchewan residents. They're an insured rate. They're a hedged rate if you like. So it doesn't have the variances of the total market variance, and that's an important factor as we look into going forward in Saskatchewan and ensuring again that Saskatchewan residents have the lowest possible rate. Not only are they focusing on the rate, but they're looking at innovative expansions like the flare gas expansion. And the members opposite will know all about it because I know that they've served as critics and have looked at this area, and it's something

that's happening.

Also the involvement in CO₂ capture and transmission opportunities, working together with the Petroleum Technology Research Centre at the University of Regina is something that SaskEnergy is doing, Mr. Speaker. They're continuing the good work on hydrogen vehicles and gasoline vehicles and the dual vehicles that they're able to put forward. And, Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy is taking its role as a leader in conservation very seriously. Some 52,000 customers participate in conservation programs, Mr. Speaker, one of the best records in the country bar none. And for that, I am very proud of the good people at SaskEnergy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about other areas of my responsibility. One of the areas is the new Saskatchewan entertainment facility that we're taking a serious look at. To date 100 organizations have met with officials and consultants in looking at the possibilities going forward of a new stadium in Saskatchewan. We have worked with the very best consultants. We really appreciate the partnership of the city of Regina, the Saskatchewan Roughriders, the federal government and the provincial government, Mr. Speaker.

[16:45]

Right now the consultants are half-way through their work. They're looking at a facility about the size of 33,000 seats and can be expandable to 45 or 50,000 seats. And we know that it's something that the hon. members opposite have been provided with some information on, will be provided with more information. And we know that we have support from many of them as well.

I think it's an important function that we all have to look at and see how we can move forward in Saskatchewan.

Another area of responsibility that I have is STEP, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership. And very recently I travelled to Kazakhstan and had an opportunity to interact with STEP officials and talk about Saskatchewan companies. I accompanied officials from Cameco and was able to meet with various ministers and articulate the good partnership that we have with Cameco here in Saskatchewan, and the good partnership that that company has around the world.

They indeed set the example for how a partnership would work. They are partnered with the Crown corporation in Kazakhstan of Kazatomprom. And what they do is they take Canadian standards. They take standards that are very high and adopt them around the world. And for that, the Cameco and Inkai facility there is seen as a world leader.

And people like Jerry Grandey and Tim Gitzel, people that are top-level executives in Saskatchewan here should be congratulated for the work they did. And it was indeed a pleasure to accompany them and to talk to the Kazakhstan government about the good work they're doing.

Another area of responsibility I was able to exercise is accompanying 10 companies from Saskatchewan and going to one of the world's largest agriculture shows, the ag expo in Kazakhstan, and accompanying companies like Bourgault and

Schulte and Doepker and Morris and Brandt and Degelman, and not only helping to present them to the world but to talk about the agreements that they are signing. And I know that Bourgault and Schulte and Brandt have signed those agreements. I helped participate in those agreements. And I congratulate those companies, and I wish the others well because I know some of them are still there and doing good work.

The third area of my recent trip was university related. And we had Dr. Karen Chad and Dr. Peggy Schmeiser go and talk about the University of Saskatchewan and the partnerships that we could draw with the many Kazakhstan universities. So it was a good trip, and I look forward to informing members more fully on the trip that we had.

And for that I want to congratulate Lionel LaBelle who heads up STEP and Mr. Tim Marshall who is indeed an expert in Asia and India relations for Saskatchewan and does tremendous work. So today I want all members to publicly thank the people that do the good work in the trade operations for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Enterprise and Minister Responsible for Trade, I'm pleased to say that Saskatchewan is indeed moving forward. The Saskatchewan story is being told in many places, in many ways, in many markets around the world. It's being told in Canada. It's being told in Kazakhstan. It's being told around the world.

However there is little doubt, absolutely, that we have been affected by what's happening around the world, Mr. Speaker. But since our early days as Canada's breadbasket — we indeed did feed the world at that time — we have been a province of exporters. And that hasn't changed. The only thing different now is that the products we offer and the enormous value that they hold. It's the diversity of markets that we connect to.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention today one of the greatest exporters in Saskatchewan today is Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. And they are celebrating their 20th anniversary of becoming a publicly traded company in Saskatchewan. They've taken a net capitalization of \$1 billion; they built it up to some \$65 billion. It's retreated a bit into the 30, \$40 billion range. But indeed people like Mr. Bill Doyle and Mr. Garth Moore and others, and the 15 to 1,600 people that work in Saskatchewan every day have done a great job, and for that, Mr. Speaker, they should be congratulated.

It was with great pride, I think, that we all . . .

[Applause]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, you bet they deserve a hand.

I think we all had great pride when we saw Mr. Mayo Schmidt in our legislature today, introduced by the Premier and introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and congratulated for taking the old Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, turning it into Viterra, and winning the prestigious award for the CEO of the Year in the entire country. So, Mr. Schmidt and the entire Viterra team, thank you very much for what you've done for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Saskatchewan has undergone a

remarkable period of growth and prosperity in the last couple of years in spite of the troubles around the world. This is what has made this province the active place that it is today. We've overcome national and international trends. Our business and our people have worked hard to create a competitive and prosperous environment. It's a climate that shows that we can withstand economic challenges and we can rise above them, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan is where we continue to have one of the top results of provinces with the topic of business optimism. I'll be meeting later today with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and I know that we all look forward to their annual reports. But again, their latest report shows that Saskatchewan businesses have the optimism, have the greatest amount of optimism going forward, and that is largely because of the hard work that their members do in ensuring that that does happen.

We've been fortunate in Saskatchewan, not simply with what we have to work with — we are blessed with many resources — but what we chose to make of it. We are not meeting the global recession by treading water, by retreating into isolation, but we are maintaining the status quo.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all that, we are still setting employment records in our province, Mr. Speaker. Despite the effects of a global recession, Saskatchewan is entering into recovery with the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the fewest per capita EI recipients in the nation.

Our population is growing. Mr. Speaker, for the communities of Meadow Lake and Martensville for achieving city status in the same year — the first time that that's happened since 1912 or 1913 — it is indeed a great pleasure to see that happening. And I know members from all sides of the House will congratulate their communities on their growth, and we know that there's more to come as well, Mr. Speaker. We know that we will be welcoming other communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard various statistics bandied about in the legislature. One that I want to talk about certainly is capital investment in Saskatchewan. And that is one of the foremost statistics that people look to. Whether you're a banker, whether you're an economist, whether you're a university professor, whether you're a farmer, whether you're a business person, whether you're a student, you look at capital investment. And Saskatchewan has a record, Mr. Speaker, of some \$14 billion, which is a substantial achievement. And we know that that's going to continue to improve.

Foreign firms account for some 8 per cent of that, and that percentage is growing, Mr. Speaker. We can tell that the global mining sector, that mineral exploration in Saskatchewan has reached an all-time high this year. We were indeed the top mineral producing province in the country, bar none. And for that, the miners and the people in the industry should be congratulated in Saskatchewan.

We possess almost a third of Canada's agricultural biotechnology industry. We have infrastructure. We have research and development. We have clusters. We have advanced technology. We have a competitive business

environment, all supportive of innovation, growth, and expansion. And, Mr. Speaker, for that I want to thank the contribution of the Enterprise Saskatchewan board, a board of private sector individuals that meet on a monthly basis that advise this minister and advise this cabinet on how to reduce the barriers to growth in our province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the record speaks for itself. Those barriers are coming down, the Saskatchewan economy is growing, and indeed all Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker, are benefiting from that. And for that I want to thank the Enterprise Saskatchewan board for all the work that they've done.

Enterprise Saskatchewan tracks many indicators in Saskatchewan's economy, and just very quickly I want to run through some of them.

Mr. Speaker, the highest growth rate in real GDP [gross domestic product] — right here in Saskatchewan. The second highest employment growth rate — right here in Saskatchewan. The third largest percentage gain in population, Mr. Speaker — right here in Saskatchewan. The highest growth in personal disposable income, the second fastest growth in manufacturing, Mr. Speaker, all in one year — all in 2008.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they howl and with glib they say, oh well, maybe the 2009 statistics aren't going to be quite as good. Well maybe they won't be, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you the people that are responsible behind the scenes, they value a government that will stick with them through thick and thin and ensure that they come out on top and that's indeed what will happen, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that not only talks about the good times, Mr. Speaker. When there's struggles out there, we're with those companies for sure, and we will be there for sure when they come out of this and continue to lead the country. So there will be no laughing.

Members opposite beside me have reminded me about the reaction, what the NDP government did when the times were tough. What did they do? Did they consult? Did they come up with innovative ideas? No, Mr. Speaker. What did they do? They raised taxes each and every time. They raised the PST [provincial sales tax]. They raised corporate taxes, well whatever tax, you know — everybody can afford to pay a little more tax to the government. Mr. Speaker, you will not see that from a Saskatchewan Party government, that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Enterprise Saskatchewan and the enterprise region program — taking 13 regions that are across the country and making sure that they are able to compete, not only with the community down the road, not any more, but compete around the world. And that's what the economy of Saskatchewan is all about, being able to be competitive. That's what the economic region program is doing and that's what it's doing very well. And it's building upon the REDA [regional economic development authority] program that members opposite put forward, and I would say it was a good foundation to build upon, but we're taking it to the next step. That's what needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

I have many, many other areas of that I'd like to talk about: small-business loans in Saskatchewan, the 200 loan associations

that rely on the volunteers across Saskatchewan and the work . . . They're the ones that are making this economy hum. They're the ones that are doing it. They're the ones that should get the congratulation, and they will from this government, Mr. Speaker, not from the nonsense offered by the members opposite. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed nonsense that they are offering and it is nowhere in the debate of the Speech from the Throne.

What the Speech from the Throne really does when you summarize it all down, it articulates the vision of our Premier, a Premier who I think that members opposite can't argue is visionary, is somebody who is becoming a leader in this country. Not only in this country. I had the opportunity to accompany him to Washington, DC [District of Columbia] where some of the highest decision makers in the United States had an opportunity to hear from our Premier about his vision for our province.

It's a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, as a minister, to travel across this country and hear from people in every province, boy we wish we had your Premier in our province. And I hear that whether I go west or I go east. I hear about the vision, about this young, dynamic Premier in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that's indeed what the vision of this Throne Speech is all about. It talks about where we go from here. It talks about keeping those promises.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen in the Speech from the Throne, it talks about making more promises and identifying them, not waiting for an election, as has happened with the NDP government. We're doing it now. We're doing what the people of Saskatchewan have wanted us to do. And, Mr. Speaker, we will keep doing that as long as the Saskatchewan people have confidence in us.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am pleased to vote in favour of the Throne Speech. I will certainly be voting against the amendment, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to working for the Saskatchewan people.

The Deputy Speaker: — Being very close to the time of recess, if that's all right with the members, we will put this House in recess till 7 o'clock tonight.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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